

School Reform News

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NAEP Brings Good News and Bad News

Mediocre math achievement gets worse the longer students stay in school

BY ROBERT HOLLAND

The release of the 2000 math scores from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), sometimes called the Nation's Report Card, produced a flurry of good-news headlines during the summer doldrums, especially in states where scores were up from the 1996 sampling.

But realists like U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige quickly discouraged the popping of champagne corks.

"Despite this improvement," remarked Paige, "it is clear that with only a quarter of our fourth- and eighth-graders performing at or above proficient levels on this exam, we are not doing well enough."

On the positive side, the NAEP sampling showed that fourth-graders' average score of 228 (on a 500-point scale) was 4 points higher than the 1996 testing and 15 points higher than 1990. In addition, 70 percent were at or above the "basic" level, a bare-bones ability to do simple computation, which compares with just 64 percent in 1996.

For the eighth-graders, the average score was 275, a gain of 3 points over 1996 and 12 points over 1990. For the 12th-graders, the average score was 301, down 3 points from 1996 but still 7 points over 1990. Two-thirds of both eighth- and 12th-graders scored "basic" or higher, an improvement of 4 percentage points over 1996.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), which oversees NAEP, and Dr. Paige also handed out kudos to

NAEP continued on page 6

WA Teacher Union Found Guilty

NEA affiliate intentionally misused funds; judge also criticizes state watchdog agency

BY GEORGE A. CLOWES

The Washington Education Association intentionally broke the law in spending non-member dues for political purposes, but the state watchdog agency in charge of enforcing the law didn't act until "spurred to do so by citizen complaints" from the Olympia-based Evergreen Freedom Foundation.

That was the July 31 ruling of Thurston County Superior Court Judge Gary R. Tabor, who presided over the trial of the teacher union on charges of misusing mandatory teacher dues and fees for

political purposes over a five-year period.

The court found the WEA guilty of violating a state law that bars the union from spending agency fees—paid by non-members—on political activities without first getting specific affirmative authorization from the non-members to do so. The guilty verdict for five years of violations was not surprising, as the union had already agreed in a pre-trial stipulation that it had "committed multiple violations" of the law during 1999-2000.

The verdict makes the teacher union a repeat offender of the same law. In 1997, State Attorney General Christine Gregoire filed a \$1.2 million suit charging the WEA illegally collected dues and failed to report using the money to help defeat two 1996 school reform initiatives. (See "Washington Teachers' Union Faces Lawsuit," *School Reform*

News, April 1997.) The WEA settled that suit—also triggered by EFF investigations of campaign spending violations—for \$430,000.

As punishment for the union's most recent offense, Tabor assessed a \$200,000 civil penalty against the union, noting "a penalty amount is appropriate to preserve the integrity of our system and promote public confidence; those violating statutes will be held to answer." He then doubled the \$200,000 to \$400,000 as a punitive sanction because he found the union did not accidentally violate the law but "intentionally" chose not to comply with the clear language of the statute."

The court also ordered WEA to pay for the costs of the investigation, the trial, and

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Survey: 850,000 Students Homeschooled

Parents in the U.S. are educating 850,000 children at home—1.7 percent of school-age children—according to a new study of homeschooling released in early August by the National Center for Education Statistics.

The study shows the average homeschooling family has the same household income as other families but is more likely to be a two-parent family, to have more children, and to have parents with higher levels of education.

Almost one-fifth of homeschooled children also attend a regular public or private school on a part-time basis.

While parents cited a wide range of reasons for homeschooling, the first three of the top 10 motivations involved better education (cited by 48.9 percent of parents), religious reasons (cited by 38.4 percent), and the "poor learning environment" in regular schools (cited by 25.6 percent).



Valorie Rice homeschools her 5-year old son Corwin at their Concord, California home. Photo/Dan Rosenstrauch - Contra Costa Times

Although other motivations included family reasons (16.8 percent) and wanting to develop character and morality (15.1 percent), a majority of the remaining top 10 reasons for homeschooling involved dissatisfaction with regular schools, such as objections to what the school

teaches, the school not challenging the child, and student behavior problems at school.

The new study, "Homeschooling in the United States: 1999" is based on a 1999 house-

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Susan Sarhady



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Will Bush Education Bill Help Class of 2014?

BY LARRY PARKER

Although many education reformers lost interest in President George W. Bush's school reform proposal as it was de-toothed and diluted during the first half of the year, important decisions remain to be made as the package is finalized by a Congressional conference committee.

Those decisions will determine whether the President's proposal is likely to improve America's lowest-performing schools in time to help this Fall's kindergartners before they would graduate high school in 2014. That far-off date is when some of the Senate bill's actions to correct failing schools might actually take effect.

Under the House version of the education package, parents whose children attend a failing school would enjoy public school choice options after the first year the school fails to make needed improvement. Under the Senate version, they'd have to wait three years.

The Senate version would require that failing school districts face a state takeover, or conversion to a charter school system, after five years of insufficient improvement. The House version gives districts only three years.

The crux of the difference between the Senate and the House bills is in the consequences of the all-important math and reading tests for elementary school students: how the results will be reported, evaluated, and used, and how quickly subpar results will require decisive action.

Defining "Sufficient" Improvement

One important distinction concerns the clarity with which a school is defined as failing to make sufficient improvement. For individual schools, both the Senate and the House bills define a "failed school" as one that fails to meet its state's minimum standards for performance on reading and math tests. To avoid the consequences of remaining a failed school, it must make a certain improvement against the gap between its performance and the state's minimum standard.

The House bill defines a school's overall improvement as "sufficient" if it closes about 8 percent of that gap per year, the aim being a near-zero gap within 12 years.

The Senate bill also says a school overall would have to close any achievement gap within a decade. But according to The Education Trust, the bill defines the change using a formula that will be difficult for parents—or even math teach-

ers—to comprehend, let alone apply (see box).

How S-1 Measures Change in Performance Gap

$$\text{Change} = (((((X23*100)*Y23) + ((X24*100)*Y24) + ((X25*100)*Y25) + ((X26*100)*Y26) + ((X27*100)*Y27) + ((X28*100)*Y28) + ((X29*100)*Y29) + ((X30*100)*Y30))/((X23 + X24 + X25 + X26 + X27 + X28 + X29 + X30)*100)) + (((((Z23*100)*Y23) + ((Z24*100)*Y24) + ((Z25*100)*Y25) + ((Z26*100)*Y26) + ((Z27*100)*Y27) + ((Z28*100)*Y28) + ((Z29*100)*Y29) + ((Z30*100)*Y30))/((Z23 + Z24 + Z25 + Z26 + Z27 + Z28 + Z29 + Z30)*100)))/2$$

Where X, Y, and Z are test scores in any three consecutive years and 23-30 are different socioeconomic groups

With such confusing—yet limited—annual improvement requirements, it is conceivable under the Senate bill that a school could make only slight improvements for nine years and still not be required to make any substantial changes. Add two years to implement the program and a year to conduct the first tests, and any prospective kindergartner this Fall—a member of the high school Class of 2014—could have a diploma or drop out before needed changes are made.

Consequences

Differences between the two bills over the consequences of failure are not as pronounced, but the House provisions are tougher. The House bill absolutely requires a state takeover of failing individual schools within three years. The Senate version only permits one such "experimental" takeover in the same three-year period per school district. Senators would, in some ways, actually reward failure by giving additional aid to schools initially showing poor test scores.

The timing of rewards and punishments is the most striking difference. Under the House bill, some parents could enjoy benefits as early as 2005—"portability" options for their children within public schools, or after-school programs such as tutoring. Under the Senate bill, such limited school choice would take place no earlier than 2007.

And this is the fastest application of carrots and sticks. It would take two years to replace superintendents and other administrators in failing school districts under the House bill. Under the Senate bill, it would take five years.

"You would tell a child that isn't doing his or her homework that he's going to have to go to study hall five or 10 years from now," was how one college administrator characterized such consequences, emphasizing the need for simplicity and prompt action where incentives are concerned.

Lessons from the States

Experience from the states affirms these lessons. In Florida, children in failing schools in Pensacola were given a voucher to transfer to other public or private schools within two years of the passage of Gov. Jeb Bush's "A-Plus Program." More than 100 school districts facing state-declared "failure" in the spring of 2000 and 2001 took note and worked furiously to improve their test scores—and succeeded.

A 2000 *Teacher Choice* survey of public school teachers in Florida found a majority of the respondents opposing vouchers as a policy but grudgingly admitting the threat of school choice in their district was an important factor in the turnaround.

In Texas, many districts have made significant improvements even without such structural incentives. Those improvements occurred, according to Deputy Secretary of Education William Hansen in a recent interview with *Teacher Choice*, because many administrators took prompt action. Those administrators included then-Houston Superintendent of Schools and now U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige.

"He went in and promoted people, demoted people, fired and hired principals, retrained others," Hansen noted of Paige. Giving similar action tools and mandates for Paige and state and district administrators to implement the Bush program may be the key to whether testing makes a difference.

One indication that testing and incentives do matter is the strong reaction of the National Education Association, which recently passed a resolution that would sabotage the President's reforms by encouraging parents to have their children boycott performance tests.

Larry Parker is senior reporter for *Teacher Choice* at the *Alexis de Tocqueville Institution*. His email address is lparker@adti.net.

A Testing Dilemma For Congress: HR-1 vs. S-1

REQUIREMENT	HOUSE BILL (HR-1)	SENATE BILL (S-1)
Failing schools must raise test scores for all students...	Each year	Within a decade
Test scores must be raised for all students by...	8% each year	See formula in article
Failing schools must raise test scores for ethnic groups...	Each year	Each year
Test scores must be raised for ethnic groups by...	8% each year	1% each year
Students at failing individual schools eligible for some school choice within...	1 year	3 years
Failing school districts must replace superintendents/ other leaders within...	2 years	5 years
Failing individual schools must be taken over by state or converted into charter schools within...	3 years	3 years, on experimental basis
Failing school districts must be taken over by state within...	3 years	5 years

Voucher Proposals Flourish Nationwide

BY GEORGE A. CLOWES

Although school vouchers were pronounced dead and buried by gleeful opponents after two initiative defeats last November—and also squeezed out of President George W. Bush's education initiative—the idea continues to surface in school choice proposals from Vermont to New Mexico.

Popular in Polls

Why do vouchers refuse to die? Public opinion polls provide the answer: Americans like the idea of vouchers. They may not vote for specific voucher questions on the ballot, but they are quite open to the general idea of parents directing their tax dollars to the school of their choice.

In his new book, *Schools, Vouchers, and the American Public*, Stanford University political science professor Terry M. Moe finds 60 percent of the public in favor of vouchers and only 32 percent against.

A July survey of Hispanic-American adults by McLaughlin & Associates showed even stronger support among Latinos, with 73 percent supporting the idea of "taxpayer funded vouchers to help low-income families send their children to a better public, private, or church run school."

A new book released in June by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies reports 60 percent of black Americans favor vouchers, with support rising to 76 percent among blacks aged 26 to 35.

Why, then, do only 25 percent of black elect-

ed officials support vouchers?

According to the Joint Center book, the elected officials are simply responding to the views of the voting black public. David A. Bositis, a senior political analyst at the Center, points out that blacks older than 50 are the ones who tend to vote, and they oppose vouchers by 48 percent to 44 percent.

"School vouchers are a key issue in the race for governor in New Jersey. Republican candidate Bret Schundler . . . has been promoting vouchers for a decade in Jersey City, a staunchly Democratic city."

Black Alliance Targets St. Louis

An organization consisting largely of young African-Americans, the Black Alliance for Educational Options, will start a television advertising campaign in St. Louis in the fall with the aim of forming a St. Louis chapter. The ads promote vouchers as a way for low-income parents to get their children out of failing public schools.

"What we find is that citizens in St. Louis are very hungry for [choice]—be it charter schools or vouchers," Donayle Whitmore told the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch's* Matthew Frank. Whitmore, who was turned down in her attempt to create a charter school in the city, heads the effort to establish the BAEO St. Louis chapter.

More than 1,200 St. Louis children already participate in two privately funded voucher programs, the St. Louis School Choice Scholarship Foundation and the St. Louis Gateway Educational Trust. Another 1,400 or so children attend four charter schools that opened last year.

As many as 3,000 children could sign up to attend four new privately run, tuition-free academies opening this fall as St. Louis Academies, thanks to the efforts of Bishop Lawrence Wooten of the Church of God in Christ and former Marine Tim Daniels. Eventually, they anticipate converting the academies to charter schools, but sponsors currently are refusing to review new charter applications.

Florida Sees Surge in Special Ed Vouchers

In just three years, Florida's McKay Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities has grown from a small pilot effort involving just two children to a statewide voucher program that will likely have more than 4,000 participants this fall, up from 963 last year.

The program permits parents of special education students to transfer their child—and the education dollars allocated to that child—

For more information...

WWW

The report on the Dayton, Ohio PACE program is available from the Web site of the Harvard Program on Education Policy and Governance at www.ksg.harvard.edu/pepp/papers.htm.

An abstract of the NBER working paper, *Vouchers for Private Schooling in Colombia: Evidence from a Randomized Natural Experiment*, is available online at <http://papers.nber.org/papers/W8343>. The full text can be purchased for \$5.

to another public school or to a private school. With 350,000 students eligible for the scholarships, the McKay program could soon become the nation's largest voucher initiative.

A voucher in the McKay program is worth up to the amount of a school's tuition, from about \$5,000 to \$17,000. Parents must pay the difference if the private school tuition is higher than the value of the voucher.

Ironically, transfers to other public schools may be more restricted under the program than transfers to private schools, as 66 disabled students in Pinellas County recently discovered. They had wanted to transfer to other public schools this fall but cannot do so until the 2003-2004 school year because of the district's desegregation plan, which requires students to be assigned to schools based on geographic attendance zones.

The desegregation plan applies only to public schools, and so the nearly 500 disabled students who applied to private schools are unaffected.

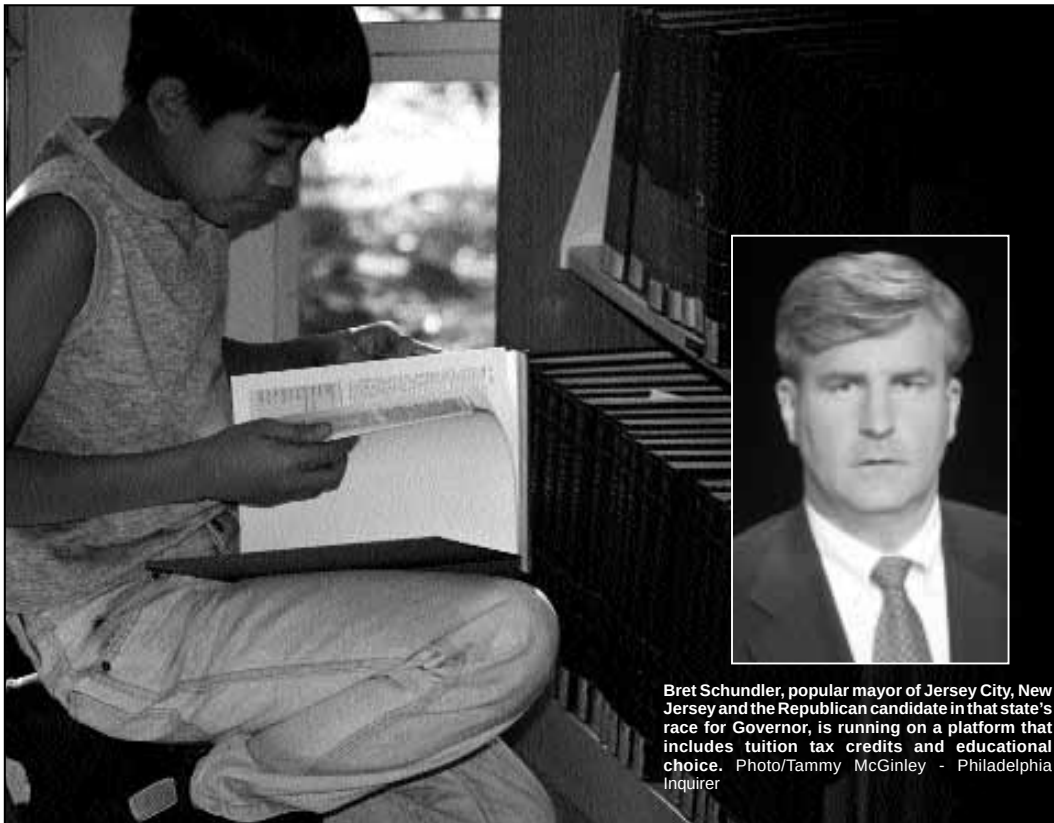
Voucher Push Continues in New Mexico
Democrats control the legislature in New Mexico and have rejected every attempt by Republican Governor Gary Johnson to introduce publicly funded vouchers into the Land of Enchantment's public education system. Nevertheless, Johnson plans to keep pushing for school choice until he leaves office at the end of 2002.

"You're not going to see a letup in my efforts to try and push the Legislature to fund vouchers," he said in July. Johnson addressed a news conference to announce a \$25,000 donation from the R.D. and Joan Dale Hubbard Foundation to Educate New Mexico, a non-profit organization that provides privately funded vouchers to New Mexico children.

Vouchers an Issue in New Jersey Race
School vouchers are a key issue in the race for governor in New Jersey, with Republican candidate Bret Schundler embracing them and Democrat candidate Jim McGreevey opposing them.

"I do believe in vouchers and I don't want anyone to think I don't," he recently told *Star-Ledger* reporter John Mooney.

Preschoolers Get Vouchers in New Orleans
On August 16, the office of Louisiana Governor Mike Foster announced the Pelican State's first school voucher program would start this fall, allowing 600 New Orleans four-year-olds from



Bret Schundler, popular mayor of Jersey City, New Jersey and the Republican candidate in that state's race for Governor, is running on a platform that includes tuition tax credits and educational choice. Photo/Tammy McGinley - Philadelphia Inquirer

low-income families to attend private preschools using public funds.

The vouchers, which will be distributed by lottery to eligible families who apply, are worth \$4,700 per student. The funds will be distributed to schools—secular private or religious private—selected by parents. As many as 1,400 children may be eligible for the vouchers.

The \$3 million program, funded with federal welfare money as a one-year pilot, was approved in June as an amendment to a larger package of social services programs. At the time, the provision drew little opposition.

But within a month of passage, the state branch of the American Civil Liberties Union filed suit against Foster, alleging he withheld public documents related to the program. The ACLU also is considering filing a suit regarding the constitutionality of the new law. A preschool program at the public schools is being

Milwaukee Program Funded for Next Year
In final budget negotiations at the end of July, Democrats in Wisconsin's State Senate dropped their call for slicing the Milwaukee voucher amount in half, but Republicans had to shelve their plan for expanding the program to other cities.

Legislators agreed to continue the school choice program but to fund it as a separate item from the public schools, thus eliminating some minor fluctuations in funding for several districts outside Milwaukee.

Dayton Vouchers Satisfy Parents

The Harvard Program on Education Policy and Governance in August released an evaluation of the two-year-old privately funded voucher program in Dayton, Ohio, called Parents Advancing Choice in Education (PACE).

Since students who received the vouchers were chosen randomly by lottery, researchers could readily compare the "voucher effect" by comparing families who applied for a voucher and received one versus those who applied but didn't get one.

About 40 percent of parents who won the voucher lottery gave their child's private school an "A," compared to only 16 percent of parents whose children did not get a voucher and remained in public schools.

Compared to similar students who remained in public schools, African-American voucher students scored 8 percentile points higher on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in reading and 7 points higher on a combined reading and math score.

Other Countries Trying Vouchers

According to a July 10 *Kyodo News* report, the Japanese Cabinet Office has found in a study that giving vouchers directly to individuals for the purchase of social services would be more effective than subsidizing service providers. The study said giving more choice to consumers with vouchers would stimulate competition and the entry of new service providers.

A school choice program in Colombia used a lottery system to allocate over 125,000 vouchers to students from poor neighborhoods, with the voucher covering about half the cost of tuition at a private secondary school.

Comparing outcomes for lottery winners vs. losers, the study found the winners scored 0.2 standard deviations higher on standardized tests; were 15 percent more likely to have attended private school; had completed 0.1 more years of schooling; and were more likely to have finished eighth grade.

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Vouchers Proposed to Resolve Crisis in Vermont

With Vermont's four-year-old educational funding mechanism fast approaching crisis stage, the Ethan Allen Institute has proposed a statewide voucher system that would restore the authority of parents over their child's school, meet the obligations of the 1996 state Supreme Court ruling on equal educational opportunity, and avert the centralization of the state's 254 predominantly rural school districts into a single statewide school bureaucracy.

Although the education provision of the Vermont Constitution states simply that "...a competent number of schools ought to be maintained in each town ...," the state Supreme Court ruled in 1996 that these dozen words created an individual right to "a substantially equal opportunity to have access to similar educational revenues."

In response, the 1997 general assembly passed the "Equal Educational Opportunity Act of 1997," known as Act 60. It centralized educational power in the State Board of Education, created a new statewide property tax to fund a basic per-pupil grant that amounted to \$5,479 in 2001, and allowed towns to levy higher local taxes for their schools only if the additional funds were "shared" with other districts.

As Act 60 took effect on the citizens of the Green Mountain State, intense disputes arose regarding state "equalization" of local property valuations. Also, instead of "sharing" up to 70 percent of their additional taxes with the state, towns that wanted to spend more than the basic grant per student chose instead to donate tax-deductible contributions to local education foundations.

Ethan Allen Institute President John McLaughry, a former state senator and GOP gubernatorial candidate, announced details of the EAI voucher proposal on July 17 in a 32-page study called "Schoolchildren First."

Under the plan, funding for public education would be roughly \$841 million, or about the

same as it is now, with almost 70 percent of this raised through a uniform statewide property tax. The remaining 30 percent would come from the state's General Fund.

But the focus of McLaughry's plan is using the \$841 million to fund school children rather than schools, and to empower Vermont parents to choose the education they believe is best for their children. His model is the 90 Vermont towns where, for 132 years, education funding has followed the child, and parents are given a choice of schools for their children to attend. In those towns, parents can send their children to any public or independent school, in or out of the state, except for sectarian schools.

The Schoolchildren First proposal would expand that educational choice system to all parents and all children in all towns of the state. It also would create tax credits for charitable donations to organizations that would grant scholarships to students who wished to attend a religious school.

"The great majority of pupils will likely continue to attend schools operated by an elected local school board," noted McLaughry, since they have the advantage of tradition, facilities,

"... the Ethan Allen Institute has proposed a statewide voucher system that would restore the authority of parents over their child's school..."

and community identification. "The great difference will be that they will no longer be able to count on the coercive arm of government to deliver pupils to their door."

McLaughry points to the province of New Brunswick in Canada as a likely model of what would happen to Vermont if Act 60 is retained: After the provincial Ministry of Education took charge of allocating education funding there, all local school boards eventually were abolished.

For more information...

WWW

The July 2001 report, "Schoolchildren First," is available from the Web site of the Ethan Allen Institute at www.ethanallen.org.

"[The Black Alliance for Educational Options] now has 20 chapters established or developing in cities across the U.S. A \$1.3 million campaign involving television, radio, and print media is well underway in Washington, DC ..."

developed but will not begin until January.

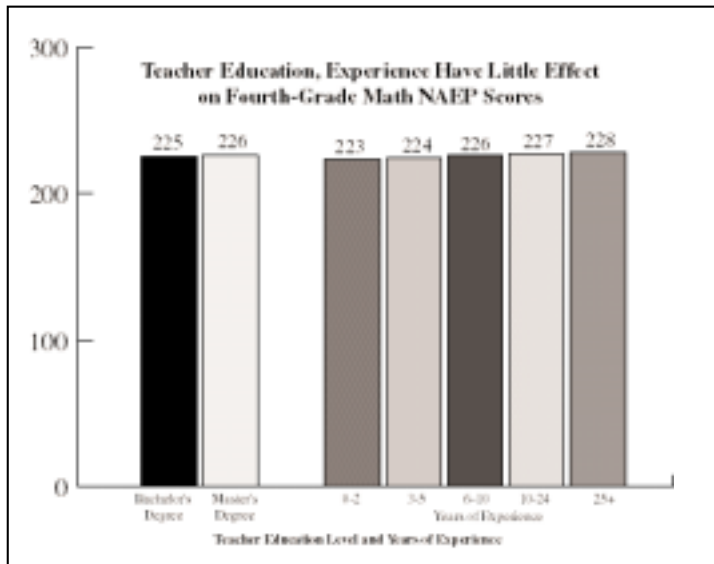
Any private preschool approved by the state board of education is eligible to receive the vouchers. There are 46 such schools in New Orleans. Republican Senate President John Hainkel, who introduced the voucher amendment in the legislature, told the *Baton Rouge Advocate* he did not care whether the four-year-olds attend Catholic, Lutheran, or secular schools with no religious affiliation.

Kirby Ducote, a lobbyist for the Louisiana Catholic Conference, said he had been urging the creation of a school choice program since 1967. The *Times Picayune* asked him if he thought the new vouchers would lead to more voucher-like programs.

"I hope so," said Ducote. "I hope we are opening a door."

Cleveland Voucher Appeal

The Cleveland school choice case has been scheduled for the U.S. Supreme Court's conference on September 24, 2001. According to the Institute for Justice, the Court could announce its decision on whether it will take the case on October 1. If the Court does grant review on that date, briefings would likely take place during the period from November 2001 to January 2002, with oral arguments in late January or early February 2002.



NAEP continued from page 1

North Carolina, Maryland, Georgia, and Texas for doing more than other states to narrow the racial gap in achievement.

"Basic" Doesn't Mean "Adequate"

But a deeper look at NAEP scores showed the Secretary was right to temper the enthusiasm.

For starters, the performance of the nation's 12th-graders did *not* improve. In fact, it actually slipped since 1996, continuing a pattern, detected by other assessments, of performance falling in relative terms the longer students stay in school. The high school seniors' average score of 301 points was down 3 points from 1996. Moreover, only 65 percent were at or above "basic," a decline from 69 percent in 1996.

It is also important to remember that "basic" is not synonymous with "adequate." It means only partial mastery. The next highest level—"proficient"—stands for solid academic performance. And only 14 percent of the 12th-graders reached the proficient level, while a scant 2 percent attained the top category of "advanced."

Indeed, fewer than a fourth of students in all three grades—23 percent for fourth-graders, 22 percent for eighth-graders, and 14 percent for 12th-graders—scored high enough to be judged "proficient."

Achievement Gap Unchanged

When the scores were broken down for minority groups, the results were even more distressing. Despite the federal government's expenditure of tens of billions of dollars annually in compensatory aid for the express purpose of narrowing the racial achievement gap, it hasn't budged over the past decade.

The situation for fourth-graders is typical: White pupils have remained exactly 31 points ahead of black pupils over the past 10 years. Even though black and Hispanic students have gained over the past decade—by 16 points and 14 points, respectively—the much-lamented gap has not narrowed.

Class Size Rhetoric

As shaky as the NAEP data are as proof of substantial progress, some education bureaucrats

placed the numbers in a heavy spin cycle. For instance, the California Department of Education (CDE) claimed a 1-point narrowing between the state's fourth-grade NAEP math scores and the national average since 1996 proves the state's initiative to reduce class sizes in the cause of "reform" is working.

But Dr. Alan Bonsteel, the San Francisco physician who heads California Parents for Educational Choice, pointed out that because NAEP is only given every four years, the "improvement" claimed by the CDE "amounts to only one-quarter of an exam score point per year, a statistically insignificant improvement."

Added Bonsteel: "At this rate, it would take California 48 years to reach the national average in mathematics. That national average is, of course, in any event not competitive in international comparisons of science and mathematics educational achievement."

"... fewer than a fourth of students in all three grades—23 percent for fourth-graders, 22 percent for eighth-graders, and 14 percent for 12th-graders—scored high enough to be judged 'proficient.'"

Class Size Reality

California fourth-graders got the "benefit" of the state's deliberate effort to reduce class sizes, while eighth-graders did not. But the fourth-graders in those small classes finished second-to-last among the 40 states taking NAEP, ahead of only Mississippi. Meanwhile, California eighth-graders topped Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and New Mexico.

Among the Golden State's fourth-graders in those vaunted smaller classes, both the white/black and white/Hispanic test-score gaps were worse than the national average. By con-

Teacher Experience and Student Achievement

Better students attract more experienced teachers

Do students reach higher levels of achievement when taught by better qualified and more experienced teachers? Just barely, according to the latest fourth-grade math scores from the 2000 National Assessment of Educational Progress. However, research shows that better qualified and more experienced teachers tend to move to schools with higher-achieving students.

Experience Doesn't Mean Achievement

Although public school salary scales result in better qualified and more experienced teachers being paid more, their students get only

marginally higher test scores, reports education researcher Mike Antonucci in a recent issue of his *Education Intelligence Agency Communiqué*.

Nationally, fourth-grade students whose teachers held a bachelor's degree scored 225 on the NAEP math test. Students whose teachers held a master's degree scored 227. Students whose teachers had been teaching for two years or less scored 223, three to five years' experience 224, six to 10 years' experience 226, 11 to 24 years' experience 227, and over 25 years' experience 228.

Similar results were obtained in a study of Texas schools by economics professor Eric Hanushek of the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. He found student achievement was affected by having a first-year teacher but not much else. (See "Incentives: The Fundamental Problem in Education," *School Reform News*, January 2000.)

"The first year of teaching is kind of rocky, but after that, teacher experience doesn't seem to make much difference," Hanushek said. "Whether teachers have masters degrees or not doesn't make any systematic differences in performance, either."

Good Students Attract Teachers

Hanushek also reported that, as teachers gained experience, they tended to make career moves that put them in classrooms of higher-achieving children. This finding was echoed by Parte Barth, a senior associate at the Education Trust, who recently told *Education Week* reporter Robert C. Johnson that teachers try to transfer

"Although public school salary scales result in better qualified and more experienced teachers being paid more, their students get only marginally higher test scores..."

trast, the white/minority test-score gap for the eighth-graders in larger classes was *better*—that is, narrower—than the national average.

Bonsteel explains how politically motivated crash programs to reduce class sizes—initiatives endorsed by Republican and Democratic candidates alike in races across the country—actually can harm disadvantaged children.

"What went wrong in California is that in the spring of 1997, class sizes in kindergarten through third grade were reduced almost overnight from 30 students to 20. The need for 50 percent more teachers at that level meant hiring standards plummeted. That was especially a problem in inner-city, mostly minority neighborhoods, which saw their best teachers leave for the suburbs. California thus made the Faustian bargain of smaller class sizes often taught by weaker teachers, a problem that was especially devastating in minority communities.

"The unplanned, haphazard, and top-down imposition of reduced class sizes in schools that were already at capacity also often meant converting libraries to classrooms or holding two classes in one classroom, with a curtain hung in the middle to separate the two. At least one school held a reduced-size class in a converted janitor's closet."

Disabled Students Excluded

Finally, NAEP data are in question because the NCES did not report rates of exclusion of so-called disabled students from the testing. On the basis of preliminary investigation, testing gadfly Richard Innes of Kentucky believes several states' scores were artificially inflated because of increased exclusions of disabled students, just as happened with the 1998 NAEP reading results.

Innes regards the worst offender as oft-touted North Carolina, which excluded 9 percent more of its eighth-grade sample in 2000. That 9 percent rise in testing exclusions could just about wipe out North Carolina's reported 12 point rise in scores, if this factor were fairly taken into account, according to Innes.

Robert Holland is a senior fellow at the Lexington Institute, a public policy think tank in Arlington, Virginia. His email address is rhol1176@yahoo.com.

to schools "where it's not as difficult to teach."

What happens when an outstanding teacher bucks the trend, seeking a transfer to a school in an impoverished area with lower-achieving students, as 2000 Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year Faith Kline did in the spring of 2000?

According to Johnson, the Philadelphia School District didn't transfer her to the Edwin M. Stanton School, as she and Stanton principal James P. Otto had requested. Instead, they transferred her to another school with higher test scores in a less-needy community. A school district spokesperson said the system had worked the way it was supposed to, and blamed the snafu on the way Kline had filled out her paperwork.

"It says volumes about huge, bureaucratic districts and their commitment to children," Kline told Johnson. "If it's my fault that I didn't get to one of their schools that's the most needy, then what was their role and what was the purpose of that group [the district personnel office]?"

Try this Math Quiz

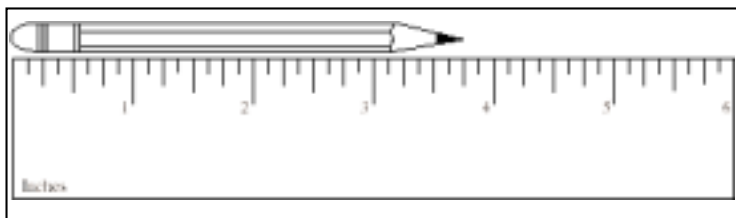
Answer each question, then guess which grade it tests

1. Donna decides to buy a new car that is selling for \$16,500. If she is required to pay 20 percent of the selling price as a down payment, what is the number of dollars required for the down payment?

- A) \$330
B) \$1,650
C) \$3,300
D) \$4,125
E) \$13,200

2. What is the length of this pencil to the nearest quarter inch?

- A) 3-1/4 inches
B) 3-3/4 inches
C) 4-1/4 inches
D) 4 inches
E) I don't know.



3. Mr. Garcia bought 5 dozen eggs at \$0.89 per dozen. What was the total cost of the eggs?

- A) \$4.05
B) \$4.45
C) \$5.89
D) \$10.68

4. A plumber charges a customer \$48 for each hour worked plus an additional \$9 for travel. If h represents the number of hours worked, which of the following expressions could be used to calculate the plumber's total charge in dollars?

- A) $48 + 9 + h$
B) $48 \times 9 \times h$
C) $48 + (9 \times h)$
D) $(48 \times 9) + h$
E) $(48 \times h) + 9$

5. Write two numbers that could be put in the [] to make the number sentence below true.

$54 < 3 \times []$ Answer: _____

6. Which of the following pieces of information would NOT be useful in deciding what type of car is the most economical to drive?

- A) Median income of drivers
B) Range of insurance costs
C) Average miles per gallon
D) Typical cost of repairs per year
E) Cost of routine maintenance

7. On a flight from Los Angeles to New York, the cost of a fare was \$400. Every seat was sold. What additional information do you need to find the total for all fares?

- A) None
B) The number of employees on the plane
C) The number of passenger seats on the plane
D) The distance from Los Angeles to New York

8. Completely factor the polynomial $3x^2 - 14x - 5$.

Answer: _____

9. If the diameter of a circle is 30 centimeters, what is the radius of the circle?

- A) 10 cm
B) 15 cm
C) 60 cm
D) 90 cm
E) 180 cm

10. A circle with diameter 10 centimeters is to be cut from a square of paper 10 centimeters on a side. Of the following, which is closest to the amount of paper left over after the circle is cut out?

- A) 9 sq. cm.
B) 21 sq. cm.
C) 24 sq. cm.
D) 69 sq. cm.
E) 84 sq. cm.

11. Joe has 35 stamps in his collection. He buys 42 more. How many does he have in all?

- A) 7
B) 35
C) 42
D) 77
E) 87
F) I don't know.

12. What is the value of $n + 5$ when $n = 3$?

Answer: _____

13. Divide 15 into 30.45

Answer: _____

14. A measurement of 60 inches is equal to how many feet? (12 inches = 1 foot)

Answer: _____

15. Solve:
 $+5 + -5 =$ _____

16. Which is worth the most?

- A) 35 pennies
B) 1 quarter
C) 4 dimes
D) I don't know.

17. There is only one red marble in each of the bags shown below. Without looking, you are to pick a marble out of one of the bags. Which bag would give you the greatest chance of picking the red marble?

- A) Bag with 10 marbles
B) Bag with 100 marbles
C) Bag with 1000 marbles
D) It makes no difference.
E) I don't know.



The following are sample test questions from the National Assessment of Educational Progress for fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-grade mathematics, with 11 questions for each grade placed in random order. Readers are invited to solve the problems and to try to guess the

18. N stands for the number of stamps John had. He gave 12 stamps to his sister. Which expression tells you how many stamps John has now?

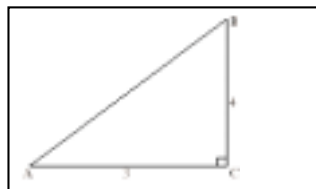
- A) $N + 12$
B) $N - 12$
C) $12 - N$
D) $12 \times N$

19. Which of the following is true about 87% of 10?

- A) It is greater than 10.
B) It is less than 10.
C) It is equal to 10.
D) Can't tell.
E) I don't know.

20. In right triangle ABC below, $\cos A =$

- A) 3/5
B) 3/4
C) 4/5
D) 4/3
E) 5/3



21. How many thirds are equal to one whole?

- A) 1/3
B) 1
C) 2
D) 3
E) I don't know.

22. Which number is between 1.2 and 1.3?

- A) .123
B) .132
C) 1.23
D) 1.32
E) I don't know.

23. The lowest point of the St. Lawrence River is 294 feet below sea level. The top of Mt. Jacques Cartier is 1,277 feet above sea level. How many feet higher is the top of Mt. Jacques Cartier than the lowest point of the St. Lawrence River? Show your work.

Answer: _____

24. The weight of an object on the Moon is 1/6 the weight of that object on the Earth. An object that weighs 30 pounds on Earth would weigh how many pounds on the Moon?

Answer: _____

25. Subtract two three-digit numbers: $604 - 207$

Answer: _____

26. Sam can purchase his lunch at school. Each day he wants to have juice that costs 50 cents, a sandwich that costs 90 cents and fruit that costs 35 cents. His mother has only \$1.00 bills. What is the least number of \$1.00 bills that his mother should give him so he will have enough money to buy lunch for 5 days?

Answer: _____

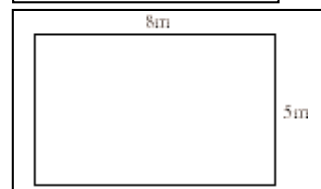
grade level that each question is designed to test.

Answers are on page 20.

These sample questions are taken from a list of more than 500 posted at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/itmrls/itmrls.htm>?MATLST

27. What is the PERIMETER of this rectangle?

- A) 13 meters
B) 26 meters
C) 40 meters
D) 80 meters
E) I don't know.



28. How many integers are there between $\sqrt{15}$ and $\sqrt{63}$?

- A) Three
B) Four
C) Five
D) Six
E) Seven

29. Anita is making bags of treats for her sister's birthday party. She divides 65 pieces of candy equally among 15 bags so that each bag contains as many pieces as possible. How many pieces will she have left?

- A) 33
B) 5
C) 4
D) 3
E) 0.33

30. Which of the following numbers, when rounded to the nearest thousand, becomes 27,000?

- A) 26,099
B) 26,490
C) 27,381
D) 27,550
E) 27,640

31. Solve 184 divided by 115.

- A) 0.625
B) 1.6
C) 1.625
D) 16

32. Write this number as a decimal:

$3 \frac{3}{10} =$ _____

33. Brett needs to cut a piece of string into four equal pieces without using a ruler or other measuring instrument. Write directions to tell Brett how to do this

Answer: _____



HOME continued from page 1

hold survey conducted as part of The Parent Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program.

Students were considered to be homeschooled if their parents reported them as being schooled at home instead of at a public or a private school, if they attended public or private schools 25 hours a week or less, and if they were not being homeschooled because of a temporary illness. In terms of raw, unweighted numbers, the survey involved 275 homeschooled students out of a total surveyed student population of 17,108.

Key Findings

Among the study's major findings:

- An estimated 850,000 students were being homeschooled in the spring of 1999, or 1.7 percent of U.S. students aged 5 to 17.
- Four out of five homeschoolers (82 percent) were exclusively homeschooled. The remaining one in five (18 percent) were enrolled part-time in public or private schools.
- The household income of homeschooling families was no different from that of other families with school-age children.
- Three out of four homeschoolers (75.3 percent) were non-Hispanic whites. Overall, two out of three (64.7 percent) students in the U.S. are non-Hispanic whites.
- On average, parents in homeschooling families had higher levels of educational attainment than the average parent. Among homeschooling parents, 25.1 percent held bachelor's degrees and 22.3 percent held graduate degrees, compared to only 16.5 percent and 16.8 percent respectively in the average family.

For more information...

WWW

The August 3, 2001 study from the National Center for Education Statistics, "Homeschooling in the United States: 1999," is available from the NCES Web site at: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2001033>

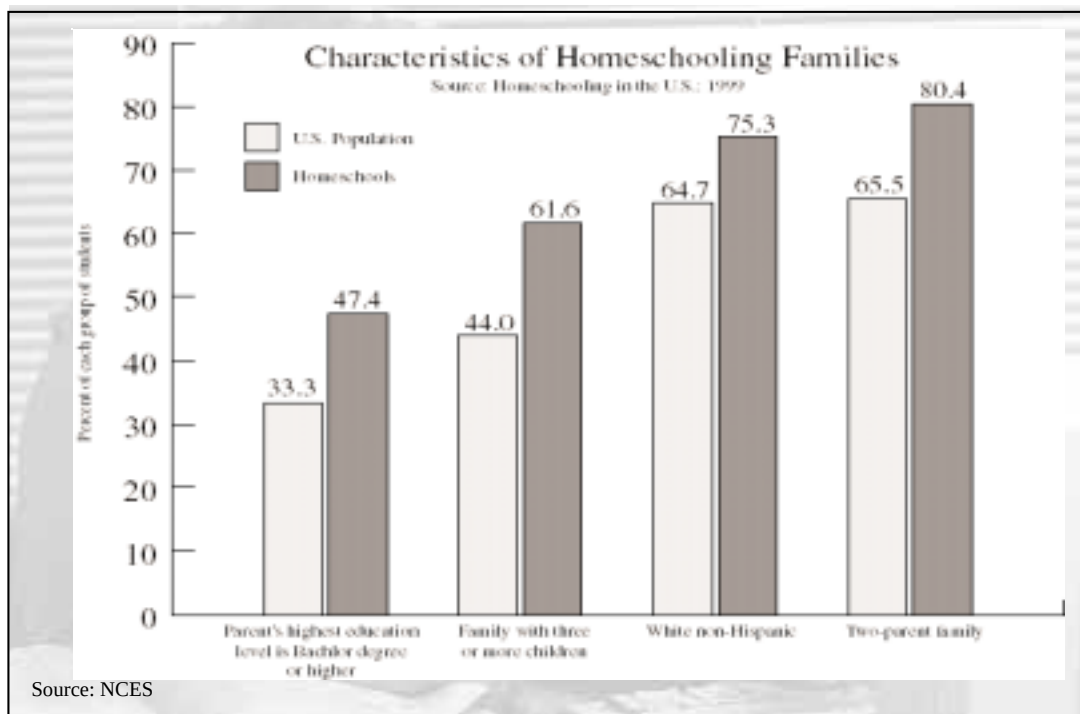
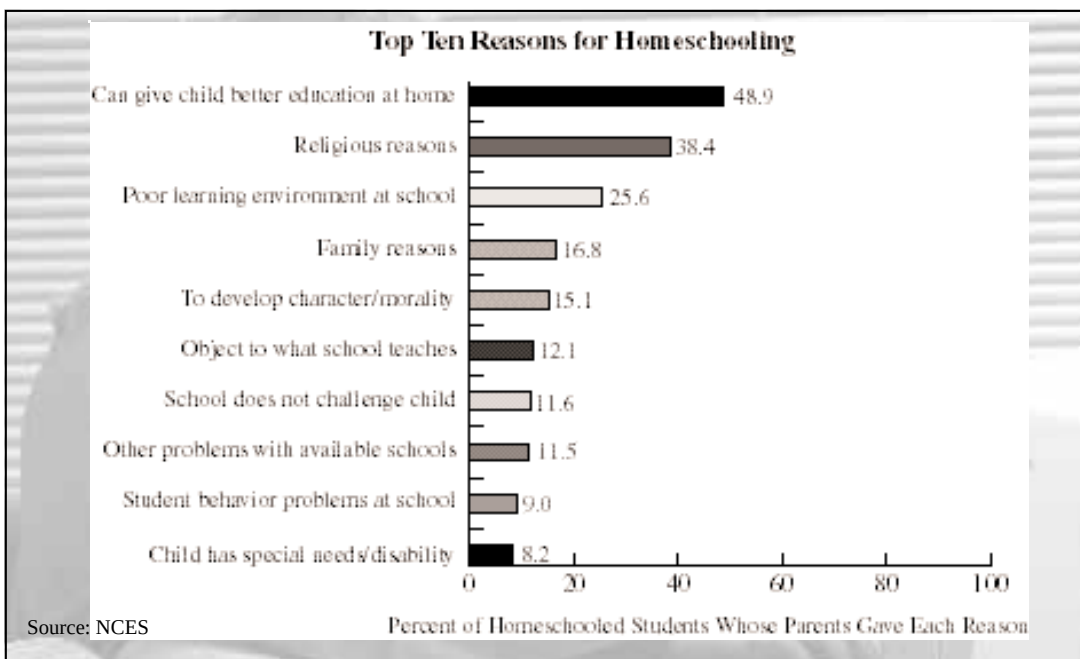
- A large majority (80.4 percent) of homeschooled families have two parents, compared to 65.8 percent among all families.
- On average, homeschooling families have more children, with 61.6 percent having three or more children compared to only 44.0 percent of all families.

Estimate Too Low?

While conceding the new study "does provide useful demographic information that may help researchers and legislators better understand homeschoolers," the Home School Legal Defense Association believes the new estimate of homeschooler numbers is too low for two main reasons.

First, because many homeschooling parents have had to fight the government for the right to teach their children at home, a number of them may not have responded to the survey because of a reluctance to give the government information that might lead to restricting that right.

Second, many homeschoolers may have



identified themselves as private schools because in almost a quarter of the states (12 out of 50), state law considers many home schools to be private schools.

Previous estimates of the number of homeschoolers in the U.S. have been somewhat higher than the new Department of Education figure. In 1997, Brian Ray, president of the National Home Education Research Institute, estimated the number to be around 1.15 million for the 1996-97 school year and predicted the number would grow to at least 1.3 million by 1999-2000. In 1999, U.S. Education Department researcher Patricia M. Lines estimated the number to be around 700,000 during 1995-96, possibly growing to 1 million by 1997-98.

Group Supports Black Homeschooling

Although black non-Hispanic students make up 16.0 percent of the 1999 student population, they make up only 9.9 percent of students in homeschooling families.

Veteran home educators Eric and Joyce Burges of Baker, Louisiana, hope to increase that number with a homeschooling resource organization they formed in July 2000, the National Black Home Educators Resource Association. Joyce Burges spoke at the July 16 school choice conference in Indianapolis held by the Indiana Chapter of the Black Alliance for Educational Options.

For more information...

WWW

Information on the National Black Home Educators Resource Association is available from the Association's Web site at www.christianity.com/nbhera.

The Burges' group provides information on getting started in homeschooling, opportunities to network with other homeschooling families, and assistance with teaching materials and advice on curriculum. Dr. Brian Ray of the National Home Education Research Institute calls NBHERA "a voice for African-American homeschoolers."

Charter School Facilities & Finance

Contracting for Services

BY MARK HOWARD

Charter school founders have many business decisions to make in the process of developing a school, most of which they will make themselves.

However, without the appropriate expertise, a do-it-yourself approach to facilities and finance can lead to mistakes that can cause substantial cost increases and delay the opening of the school. These are areas where contracting for sound professional services is required.

Time and money can be saved in the startup operation by utilizing professionals who have expertise in areas where the founders need assistance, such as identifying facilities locations, negotiating leases or purchase contracts, and obtaining financing for renovation or development. Here, the founders should look to real estate brokers, mortgage brokers, architects, and engineers for assistance.

Real Estate Brokers

Real estate brokers should be contacted early in the development process. When the charter school developer begins work on the application process, a decision should be made as to what geographical area the school wants to serve.

Once that decision has been made, the founders should speak to several commercial real estate brokers in the area and evaluate which of these professionals should be added to the development team.

The real estate broker is a professional who knows the real estate market and the values within that market. He or she will know rental rates, occupancy costs, existing vacancies, and, in many cases, the landlords operating in the target area.

Having this professional negotiate for space will ensure that the charter school founders make a market deal for the space they rent or the property they purchase. In most cases, the landlord pays the commission of the real estate broker even though the broker represents the tenant.

Mortgage Brokers

Most charter schools are unable to finance all of their needs from the initial start-up monies they are able to raise. The ability to finance their improvements in many cases will make the difference between starting a school or shelving the idea for a future date.

A competent mortgage broker can help search for appropriate financing in the mortgage market, where the charter school industry now is receiving substantial attention from lenders and underwriters in the private sector.

Finding a mortgage broker who understands the revenue streams of a charter school and who can create a financing package for potential lenders is an important asset. The names of recommended brokers may be obtained from existing charter school operators and from charter school trade groups.

Mortgage brokers specialize in the types of loans they are able to place. In many instances,



private-sector mortgage brokers will require a minimum size loan that may exceed the amount needed by a small charter school. Even if a mort-

"[W]ithout the appropriate expertise, a do-it-yourself approach to facilities and finance can lead to mistakes that can cause substantial cost increases and delay the opening of the school."

gage broker cannot service the size of loan needed by the founders, the broker usually will be able to recommend a mortgage broker or lender making loans in the range and size requested.

Finding money takes time and effort, and contracting with a mortgage broker ensures that an individual with the required knowledge and experience in the financial markets will devote the necessary effort to find a loan to fit the founders' requirements.

Architects and Engineers

Finding existing space that is built for educational purposes is difficult, since existing public school systems rarely have an inventory of school facilities sitting vacant. Once the real estate broker has identified a location for the charter school, the founders should quickly bring in an architect and engineer to assess the site and its potential for conversion to an educational facility.

These professionals will know the local rules and regulations regarding educational facilities, and they will be familiar with the life, health, safety, and accessibility issues required in any conversion space. The founders should secure the recommendations of these professionals before making any decision regarding a facility.

Mark Howard has specialized in the development of commercial properties since 1980. He owns and operates M.H. Realty Associates, Inc. in Tamarac, Florida. Readers with questions on facilities and finances are encouraged to contact him directly at mgfl@aol.com. The most frequent questions about common problems will be included in future columns.

Charter School Update

COMPILED BY GEORGE A. CLOWES

Although charter school developers in Illinois may appeal a local denial to the State Board of Education, the state board has seen fit to overturn local denials only in two early cases.

The Emerson Park Development Corporation has twice appealed to the ISBE after the Tomorrow's Builders Charter School was denied twice by East St. Louis School District 189.

After denial by both District 189 and ISBE last year, the school's vocational program this year was developed jointly with District 189. However, District 189 suddenly denied the charter application when it was put to a vote in June. The second appeal was to have taken place in late August.

Illinois Charter School Facts
August 6, 2001

Missouri Sets New Guidelines

Facilities and lack of funding for facilities are the greatest hurdles to start-up charter schools nationwide. New guidelines from the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) have raised those hurdles for Missouri charter schools, which now must secure an approved facility within 90 days of charter approval or have their charter revoked. Under such draconian restrictions, some schools may never open.

The Garden School, for example, a school for 160 K-3 students sponsored by the Missouri Botanical Garden and Southeast Missouri State University, was approved last September. But it was unsuccessful in securing a facility in the Garden neighborhood and so will not open. The Construction Careers Charter School will be the only new St. Louis charter school opening this fall, bringing the total to five.

A group of frustrated charter school supporters—mostly parents—met in St. Louis in late July to vent their anger at the lack of progress in creating charter schools in the city, where more than a dozen applications have been turned back. Public universities are authorized to approve charter schools but

are refusing to do so because the state did not provide them with funds to pay for oversight.

"I'm probably more frustrated by how difficult it is for new charters to gain passage than about any other issue since I left office," former State Senator Frank Flotron told the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*. Flotron helped design Missouri's charter school law.

DESE's charter schools division also is calling for the state's charter schools to increase their percentage of Missouri-certified teachers from 80 percent to 100 percent. At the same time—in response to a growing teacher shortage—DESE's Division of Teacher Quality and Urban Education is calling for reducing the demand for certified teachers in the state's public schools by adopting alternative certification requirements similar to those authorized for Missouri's charter schools.

Illinois Charter School Facts
August 1, 2001, July 25, 2001

For more information...

WWW see www.edreform.com/update/2001/010515.html

Ohio Charter Schools Get Subpoenas

All 68 charter schools in Ohio have been served with subpoenas in the Ohio Federation of Teachers' challenge of that state's charter law. School officials were given 30 days to provide "any and all" of their records, including financial and confidential personnel records.

The Ohio Community School Center filed and was granted an extension for the schools, but records are still scheduled to be delivered into the teacher union's hands by early October, adding a significant burden on charters as they prepare for the new school year.

Charter school proponents warn that allowing access to personnel records would enable the OFT to engage in a campaign of harassment against teachers working at the charters. *Center for Education Reform Newswire*
August 7, 2001

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Parents Support Teachers in Maryland Test Scandal

Test coordinator shared advance copy of exam: "Take a look"

BY NEAL LAVON

School officials in Montgomery County, Maryland are hoping this current school year turns out better than the last one, when comments from two students at a low-scoring middle school led to the unearthing of the district's second major cheating scandal in two years.

After a school test coordinator shared an advance copy of a standardized test, questions from the exam were given to some students in class or as homework. But when the county superintendent punished the teachers and administrators involved, parents were outraged at the superintendent, not the teachers and administrators.

When the two sixth-grade students at Silver Spring International Middle School (SSI) in Silver Spring, Maryland recognized questions on the test, they reported their concerns to the test proctor, triggering a probe by county school officials. After a two-month preliminary investigation, Superintendent Jerry Weast announced the suspension of five SSI teachers and two SSI administrators.

Pending appeals, the principal at SSI was demoted and reassigned, while the assistant principal faces dismissal and revocation of his teaching certificate. The math team leader is slated for dismissal and loss of her teaching certificate for five years; two other teachers face suspension for a year without pay, with their teaching certificates suspended for one year as well; the two other teachers were subsequently reinstated and escaped with letters of reprimand.

Students and taxpayers were penalized, too. The scores of 303 sixth-graders who took the standardized test had to be thrown out and the school system was required to pay the test's publisher \$424,275 to reimburse the cost of preparing new exam booklets and other supporting materials.

Parents were outraged, but apparently unwilling to hold SSI staff accountable for their actions. In fact, the reaction of many parents was to support SSI teachers and administrators and to vent their criticism against the superintendent and school system. They held candlelight vigils in honor of the teachers, staged protest rallies, and held press conferences for the local media.

What happened?

Located adjacent to Washington, DC, Montgomery County, Maryland is the nation's 19th largest school system. It has a \$1.2 billion budget, 189 schools, 18,000 employees, and nearly 135,000 pupils. Silver Spring International Middle School is a relatively new school in an expanding part of the county. Last year, it enrolled 884 students—35 percent Hispanic, 29 percent African-American, and 28 percent Caucasian.

Like other public education systems, Montgomery County began instituting standardized testing in recent years. One of the tests it uses is the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS). The CTBS is a national test that seeks to measure

the reading and mathematical abilities of students in the second, fourth, and sixth grades. It was introduced in Maryland about 10 years ago.

Low Math Scores

On the 1999-2000 CTBS tests, SSI's math scores were some of the lowest in the county, according to the *Montgomery Journal*. All but four of the county's other public schools beat SSI on math,

"... SSI Assistant Principal and test coordinator Jerome DeMarchi gave an advance copy of the CTBS math test booklet to Math Department Head Amy Land about a month before the 2000-2001 test..."

with SSI students tying for the second-lowest math score. SSI students had the lowest score in the county on the math computation test.

According to the Montgomery County School system's investigation, SSI Assistant Principal and test coordinator Jerome DeMarchi gave an advance copy of the CTBS math test booklet to Math Department Head Amy Land about a month before the 2000-2001 test, scheduled for March 15.

In an interview with the *Montgomery Journal*, Land, 29, confirmed DeMarchi gave her the booklet and told her "to take a look at it." The school system maintains Land was not authorized to have the test in advance.

Although Land and DeMarchi had signed non-disclosure agreements that barred copying the exam, Land assumed she had been given the CTBS booklet to help math teachers make sure their students were properly prepared for the upcoming exam. In February, she made eight copies and called a meeting to distribute them to the SSI math team—Toby Bastas, Cecilia Taylor, and Stephanie Zoz—as well as to other teachers. About a week after the meeting, Taylor gave a copy of the test to teacher Michael Essel, a 31 year-old former business major who was not present at the meeting.

"Do not show this to children. This is for your information," Land said she told the teachers at the meeting, according to her interview with the *Journal*. She told them it was the upcoming CTBS test, that "it was not to get to the kids," and that they were "to keep it locked and secure."

Not at Meeting

Bastas, 26, followed Land's advice, telling the *Journal* she scanned the material to make sure her students knew it, and then kept it in a locked drawer. But Essel told the *Journal* his copy of the test contained nothing to identify it as the CTBS exam. As a result, he used it like any other infor-

mation packet and "reviewed questions with his students in class... and copied a sheet of word problems and gave them as homework."

On the day of the exam, two sixth-graders told the test proctor, Bastas, they recognized the test questions. In a letter she wrote to the school system, Bastas said she went to Land, and then she and Land asked the students' math teacher, Essel, if he had given out the booklet's questions to students in advance. In his *Journal* interview, Essel said he had, but that was the first he knew the booklet was the actual test.

Although SSI Principal Renee Brimfield said she informed the district's testing office as soon as she learned of the incident, the report prepared by the district after its investigation stated she "failed to investigate and document the testing violations in a timely and responsive manner and tried to minimize staff involvement in the violations." Brimfield said that wasn't her responsibility.

Unexpected Reaction

When the events became public and the school district suspended the SSI administrators and teachers, most parents joined the teacher union in condemning the district. Comments were

made about "an overreaction" and concerns were raised about the negative impact of students losing their math teachers late in the year.

"You don't punish people for making a mistake," said one parent. This is "a colossal judgment error," chimed in an SSI PTA officer. In a letter to *The Washington Post*, a parent of a seventh-grader took the school system to task for removing staff without a "fair hearing" and punishing those who came forward and reported the violations. "The response... has been all wrong," she said.

There was also wide support for Brimfield, who, according to one parent, was "the heart and soul of the school." Either ignoring or ignorant of SSI's abysmal performance on the previous year's math tests, the same parent praised the principal for overseeing "a solid instructional program."

The pressure from parents resulted in the reinstatement of Bastas and Zoz with only letters of reprimand going into their files. When the two teachers returned to SSI on June 4, they were greeted with a huge welcome rally.

Neal Lavon is a writer living in Takoma Park, Maryland. His email address is nlavon@his.com.

Update: Punishment Adjusted

In early September, seven of the 11 teachers implicated in the cheating scandal reached settlements with the Montgomery County School System "adjusting the punishments," according to local press sources. The seven affected teachers then dropped their plans for appeals.

Within hours, school officials and private attorneys were haggling over whether or not

the teachers were "100 percent cleared," with the school maintaining disciplinary actions were taken in each case.

The former principal of Silver Spring International Middle School, Rene Brimfield, and the former assistant principal, Jerome DeMarchi, vow to fight on through the appeals process. One teacher is not contesting the actions taken against her, and another teacher is appealing his one-year suspension.

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Children First AMERICA

parental choice in education

October 2001



The New Segregation in Our Public Schools

America's low income parents often lack the means to rescue their children from failing schools. It's economic segregation, but minorities are still its victims.

Virginia Walden-Ford: From Little Rock to DC—Her Half Century Fight for Education Freedom

As a child, I witnessed the battle to integrate the Central High School, Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957. After the initial integration battle, my father served as the first African-American Assistant Superintendent of the Little Rock District (as a result, the Ku Klux Klan threw rocks through our windows and burned a cross in my family's front yard.) My mother was one of the first of four African-Americans to teach in Little Rock's traditionally white public schools. In 1966, I was in the first large group of African-American students to enter Central High School since reopening (before then, only a handful of African-American students attended Central High).

My parents went through a lot to help integrate the Little Rock District, and others went through even more. You can imagine my heartache, therefore, when I recently returned to Little Rock to find the district, which my heroes had fought to integrate and for which my parents dedicated their professional careers, still gripped by segregation. Today, people of all races are allowed to



Virginia Walden-Ford at 17, among the first African-American students to re-enter Little Rock's Central High, after it closed for two years in the wake of 1957's integration.

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attend, but those with choices have gone elsewhere. Today's Little Rock School District has higher spending but low performance—despite the sacrifices of people like the Little Rock 9, and other heroes like my father and mother. To see what has become of the district we fought so hard to integrate, see page 4. We won the battle, but tragically, we are losing the war.

Today I serve as the Director of DC Parents for School Choice, and I'm still fighting segregation—economic rather than explicitly racial segregation. DC, like the rest of the country, effectively has two school systems: one for the rich and the other for

the rest of us. The wealthy choose their schools carefully, but the system denies choice to the rest of us by assigning our children to some of the worst public schools in the nation. These people want the best for their children, but are denied better options by a system systematically discriminating against low-income parents. One such parent, Jacqueline Heirs, actually went to jail for seeking a better school for her child, as you can read about on Page 2.

How does segregation work in 2001? Upper-income people in our society can effectively choose the school their child will attend either by buying a house in an area with good public schools or by paying private school tuition in addition to their property taxes. Upper and middle-income parents, in other words, exercise what we might call “checkbook

school choice” by paying a financial premium for housing in areas that offer quality education or paying private school tuition. The school



Virginia Walden-Ford, today: As Executive Director for DC Parents for School Choice, she still fights for equal access to education on behalf of families in inner-city Washington, DC.

INSIDE:
More on *Little Rock and Central High School*, on page 2 and 4.

Right, Little Rock Central High



DC School Choice Leader's Struggle, *continued*

districts filled with nothing but those “left behind” have faced few incentives to improve, and many have simply given up on educating kids. An increasing number of African-American ministers, like Bishop Lawrence Wooten in St. Louis and Sterling Lands in Austin, have become completely fed up with their urban districts and have decided to take action (see page 3).

Segregation is an enduring national problem which we are not going to solve until everyone has the same power to choose schools enjoyed only by the privileged today . . . It may be 47 years since Brown vs. Board of Education, but the struggle must continue until equality of opportunity has been achieved for all children of all backgrounds.

While Little Rock represents an especially painful defeat, the full scope of our failure to integrate only becomes evident when you look at national statistics. The Harvard Civil Rights Project recently published a study finding that public school racial segregation increased during the 1990s. The study found that racial segregation had increased nationwide substantially in the South since 1988, but that New York, Michigan, Illinois and California were the four most segregated states in the nation. Segregation is an enduring national problem which we are not going to solve until everyone has the same power to choose schools enjoyed only by the privileged today.

Today's segregationists are much harder to spot than Orval Faubus or George Wallace. They tend to present their motives in terms of defending public education.



Virginia's father, William Harry Fowler—the first African-American Assistant Superintendent in the Little Rock District.

American students to attend disproportionately white private schools, and the veto had a huge impact on maintaining racial segregation in our nation's capital. Speaking as an African-American Democrat from Arkansas who voted for Clinton, I can only guess why the President vetoed the bill, but I can guarantee that Faubus would have been pleased with the result. It may be 47 years since *Brown vs. Board of Education*, but the struggle must continue until equality of opportunity has been achieved for all children of all backgrounds.



Virginia's mother, Marion Johnson Fowler—one of the first African-Americans to teach at a traditionally white school.

They don't wear white sheets or throw rocks. I don't believe that preserving racial segregation motivates them, but their actions produce similar results. No one seemed to think about racial segregation, for instance, when President Clinton vetoed a District of Columbia school choice bill championed by Senator Joseph Lieberman in 1998. This bill would have allowed thousands of primarily African-

WHAT WOULD MARTIN LUTHER KING HAVE DONE?

By Michael Watson, Vice President Marketing & Communications
Children First America

A black woman went to jail last year merely for trying to give her two oldest children access to better schools and thus brighter futures. It's a familiar, yet disturbing, tune to veterans of America's civil rights movement.

Jacqueline Heirs, a financially struggling black mother, never expected to land in jail for sneaking her two oldest children across district lines to a much better Philadelphia public school. But jail is where this 37-year-old Jamaican immigrant landed, a year ago this September, charged with “theft of education services”—a felony punishable by up to 6 months in prison and \$15,000 under Pennsylvania law.

Looking back at Mrs. Heirs' troubling episode, one immediately senses how desperately she loves her children. Finding them consigned by a system's calloused enrollment policy to some of the worst schools in the state, and left without any options, she acted as any caring mother would. If it meant breaking the rules, so be it. Her children's futures were at stake and motherly instinct is powerful.

However, there is a much more immoral crime at work in this case than one mother's futile attempt to beat the system to save her children. It is a not-so-subtle form of segregation, one conditioned on being poor and without choices. In a nation where opportunity and equal access have been the rule rather than the exception this is intolerable. But here is the sad truth of it. School districts draw lines and insist that children remain inside those lines regardless of educational

“All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. It gives the segregator a false sense of superiority and the segregated a false sense of inferiority.”

quality or safety. Parents with means get their children out; the rest remain trapped.

As a result, race-based segregation in America's schools has given way to an unmistakable form of means-based segregation. The outcome of this “pocketbook” segregation is the same as “skin color” segregation. Children and parents wanting access to better schools are discriminately denied that opportunity. They are often minority families. Jacqueline Heirs illustrates the point.

And that brings us to Martin Luther King.

Poor and black or not, some would argue, Mrs. Heirs was nothing more than a lawbreaker. But if he were still with us, Martin Luther King might offer a different perspective, one that would bring comfort to a caring black mother who did wrong to do right by her children. Writing from a Birmingham, Alabama jail cell 37 years ago, King eloquently defended civil disobedience as necessary to overturn unjust and immoral laws. Then he added this: “All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. It gives the segregator a false sense of superiority and the segregated a false sense of inferiority.”

If he were still with us, Martin Luther King would have been racing to Philadelphia to embrace Jacqueline Heirs, a “fellow jailbird” who fought a system's injustice and roused the conscience of her community. The struggle is far from over.



Martin Luther King

Ministers Take Drastic Steps to Save Minority Children

Parents in St. Louis and Austin unwilling to be left behind

By Matt Ladner, Ph. D., Director of Communication and Policy, Children First America

Fed up with decades of failure, St. Louis' Bishop Lawrence Wooten of the Church of God in Christ (the second largest and fastest growing African-American church in the country) has begun the process of setting up new private schools with the goal of getting 3,000 children out of the dysfunctional government run system. The Bishop had been attempting to set up charter schools for years, but had run into a "Berlin Wall" of resistance from district authorities. Wooten told the *Wall Street Journal* that only 42% of students entering St. Louis government schools finish, despite spending \$10,000 per pupil. "We wanted to open charter schools, but to save our kids we are going to do it all by ourselves," Tim Daniels, Wooten's former marine point-man told the *Journal*. The focus of the new schools will be on academics and parental involvement.

The Bishop's move is a dramatic sign of the extreme frustration felt by those left behind in rotten, corrupt urban school systems. "The key to having a vibrant community is good schools, and we must provide them," Wooten told the press. St. Louis has been anything but a vibrant community, with a population shrinking from 850,000 in 1950 to 325,000 today. Those with choices have been fleeing St. Louis schools for decades, and when the system frustrated the community's desire to open charter schools, they simply decided to take matters into their own hands.

Another African-American minister with St. Louis ties has been fighting a similar battle in Austin, Texas. Rev. Sterling Lands, a resident of St. Louis for 17 years, has been waging an ongoing battle to

Austin on the west of the highway, and minorities concentrated on the east. Despite a 43% increase in per-student spending since 1994, 45% of AISD African-American students failed the TAAS last year. "The bottom line is that they do not expect our students to learn. We want our students to compete globally...You must expect students to excel," Rev. Lands told *Children First America*.

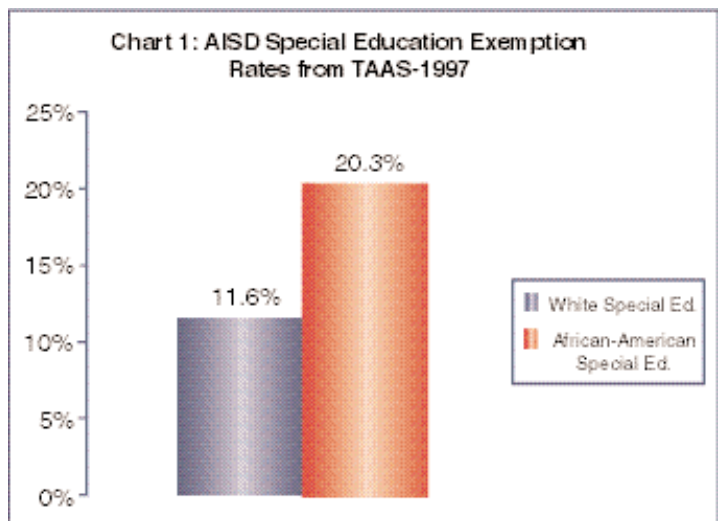
Rev. Lands became involved with school reform when he learned of disparities in special education rates in the district. Examining district figures, Rev. Lands found that African-American students were grossly over represented in special education (See chart 1 below). Fed up with this situation, a group of East Austin parents led by Rev. Lands began a dialogue with AISD and demanded immediate action. Rev. Lands has contemplated asking parents to withdraw their children in a manner similar to Bishop Wooten, but instead, Eastside parents have demanded the right to secede from AISD and have a go at improving upon the decades long record of warehousing minority students with a new school district.

Rev. Lands is a charter school and school voucher supporter, saying that it is becoming more and more popular to stand up and support vouchers, whereas a few years ago it was not, because the public system has failed to deliver. Rev. Lands sees the struggle for quality education as a continuation of the civil rights battle, and a war that should have already been won. "Forty-seven years later (after *Brown vs. Board of Education*) we are still in the same battle, and it is even more entrenched than it was. If you had asked me in 1964 would I expect to still be fighting this in 2001, I would have said 'absolutely not!'" Lands told *Children First America*. What is obvious is that men like Bishop Wooten and Rev. Lands will not stop fighting until they win.



Rev. Sterling Lands of Austin, Texas leads a community effort to redress racism in public education.

force the Austin Independent School District to address the needs of children of color. Rev. Lands has been the pastor of Greater Calvary Baptist Church in northeast Austin since 1991, and has created a very successful youth character building program which has led neighborhood children to college and away from crime and teenage pregnancy. Despite a reputation for "progressive" thought, Austin is one of the most segregated cities in the state. Locals refer to the I-35 highway running through Austin as "the inter-racial highway" with white



Findings such as the information in the chart above inspired Rev. Lands to take action for the sake of the children in his community.

Little Rock, 1957: Nine Courageous Black Children Fought for Access to Better Schools

Is the Dream Being Fulfilled Today?

Little Rock, Arkansas earned its place in history as one of several flashpoints that ignited a nation's struggle for equal educational rights and opportunities for all people.

The grainy black and white images of nine courageous black children stepping forward, in September of 1957, to integrate the long-segregated, all white Central High School endures. Their courage and their perseverance, in the face of horrific racial ugliness, defined them as heroes for the balance of their lives.

It is more than sad irony, then, that the trends depicted in the charts below illustrate how distant the dream of access to better schools remains. Created by the Arkansas Policy Foundation (APF), the charts show a steady nine-year trend (1991-1999) of plummeting student academic performance in the Little Rock School District (LRSD), a district long marred by poor quality in many of its classrooms.

Over the course of the last decade, education tax revenues in LRSD rose almost 40%...from slightly more than \$100 million in 1991 to \$167 million in 1999. During the same period student academic performance, as measured by approved standardized tests*, consistently fell. As graphs 1-3 show, the downward trend is reflected in grade 5 (down 19.7%) , grade 7 (down 8.5%), and grade 10 (down 18.3%). These are the three benchmark grades the District used, at the time of APF's study, to report overall academic performance to the public.

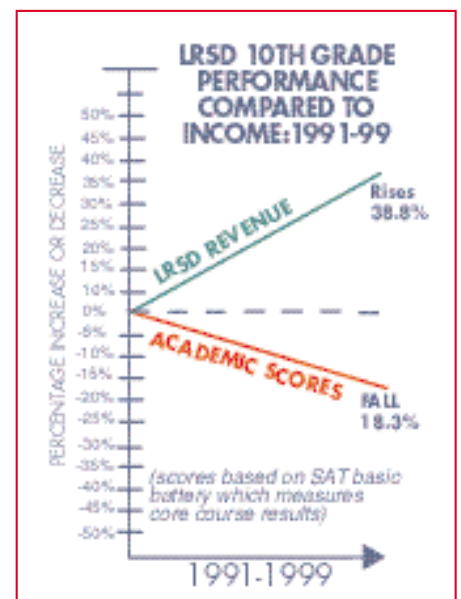
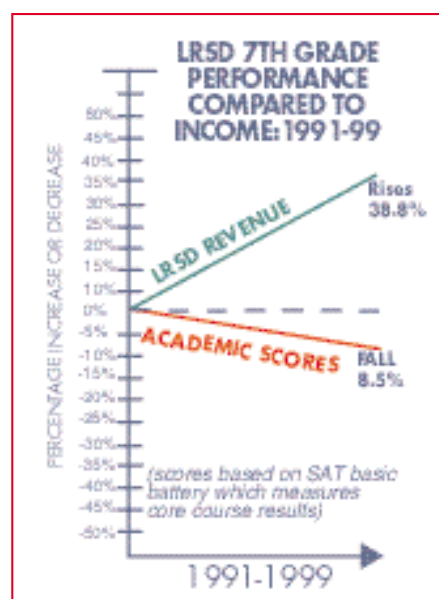
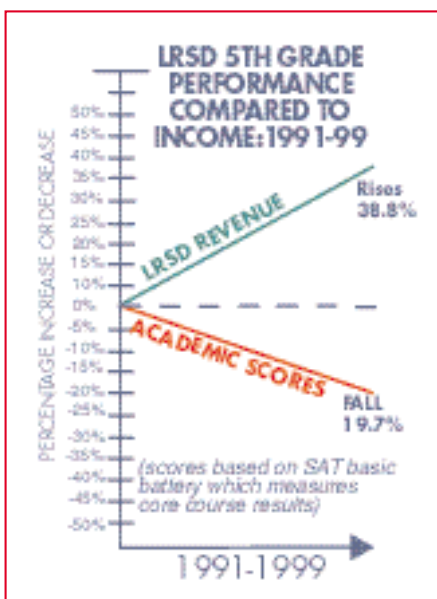
In the graphs, the performance line represents a single trend (percentage increase or decrease) for *combined* core academic courses. The subjects comprise the "basic battery," a reference for measuring only academic achievement. The measure does not include other non-academic factors that school districts sometimes lump in with academic outputs (a practice that can skew results and mislead the public).



Arkansas National Guardsmen block Elizabeth Ekford while allowing white students to pass through.



African-American journalist Alex Wilson said, "I fought for my country and I'm not running from you," as he was attacked by a mob near Central High School.



*The test LRSD uses is the Stanford Achievement Test. This is also the official test used by Little Rock's Office of Desegregation Monitoring (ODM) to determine the gap between black and white test scores.

Education Industry News

A sampling of education industry news from *The Education Economy*, a weekly publication of the market research firm Eduventures.com, which conducts research on the pre-K-12, post-secondary, corporate training, and consumer markets worldwide. This copyrighted material is used by permission of Eduventures.com, Inc.



Ameris to Merge with Children's Comprehensive Services

On August 9, a merger was announced between Ameris Acquisition, Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of Kids Holdings, Inc., and Children's Comprehensive Services, Inc., a provider of education, treatment, and juvenile justice services for at-risk children. Ameris will acquire all of CCS's outstanding shares.

Aspen Acquires Excel Academy

Aspen Education Group, a provider of supplementary educational programs for the K-12 market, announced on August 7 it had acquired Texas-based Excel Academy, a boarding school for emotionally challenged students.

Chancellor to Add 20 Schools in Fall

Chancellor Academies, Inc., a provider of public charter schools and independent private schools, announced on July 30 it will open 20 new schools this fall. The company will open 11 schools in south and central Florida, eight schools in Arizona, and one in Washington, DC. The news schools will bring Chancellor's total enrollment to more than 10,000 students in 35 charter and independent private schools.

Education Key to Pearson Growth

Pearson's expansion within the education industry was the subject of an August 1 *Financial Times* article, which noted Pearson now derives about half of its revenues from its varied education businesses. The company feels the education business will maintain its stability as education remains at the forefront of the U.S. political agenda and many states have increased funding for education in recent years.

Learning.com Funding Secured

Led by angel investors and the company's management team, Learning.com, a developer of computer skills curriculum and assessment tools for the K-12 market, announced on August 9 it received \$5.2 million in its series B round of funding.

Lighter Textbooks?

In a recent study, Eduventures analyst Sean Gallagher notes for-profit postsecondary institutions may drive adoptions of products and services from other sectors—such as the digital publishing sector. He writes: "As publishers of digital textbooks look to gain traction in the postsecondary market during the coming academic year, many vendors may discover that for-profit

it postsecondary companies such as Apollo, DeVry, and others will spearhead the movement to bring textbook content entirely online."

Sharp Drop in Private Investment in Education

According to data released recently by Venture Economics, the \$10.6 billion Q2 2001 venture capital investment in the education industry represented a 61 percent drop from the Q2 2000 total of \$27.2 billion.

Over the same period, Eduventures research shows private investment in education dropped by 68 percent, from \$814 million in Q2 2000 to \$247 million in Q2 2001. Education investments, which represented 2.9 percent of overall venture capital totals in Q2 2000, accounted for 2.3 percent of the total in Q2 2001.

Sylvan Takes on Teacher Training

In mid-July Sylvan Learning Systems announced the formation of its new Online Higher Education division, comprising its teacher training business, Canter & Associates; its online university, Walden; its K-12 teacher certification company, Sylvan Teachers Institute; and the online provider of continuing adult education, OnlineLearning.net, which Sylvan is in the process of acquiring.

Test Push Leads to Linked Services

On August 2, The Princeton Review, a provider of test preparation services, and Plato Learning, Inc., an e-learning provider for the K-12 market, announced a partnership. Through the partnership, students' performance on Homeroom.com, a division of The Princeton Review that helps students prepare for state assessments, will be directly linked to Plato's online courseware.

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Calif. Virtual Schools Offer Bennett's K12 Program

California's leading manager of virtual charter schools, Innovative Education Management, Inc., is now offering its kindergarten through second grade students the world-class curriculum of K12, the Internet-based learning program created by former U.S. Education Secretary William J. Bennett.

The agreement was announced in August. K12's curriculum for math, science, history, language arts, music, and art immediately was made available to families in IEM-affiliated schools, which currently serve about 6,000 students throughout the state.

"California is on the cutting edge of the next chapter in American education, and K12's partnership with IEM confirms that fact," said K12 CEO Ron Packard. K12 chairman Bennett called the development "a critical step forward in opening up the channels to educational excellence in California."

K12 programs include a complete learning program plus supplementary learning and assessment tools. Programs currently are available for students in grades K-2; programs for grades 3-12 will be added each year through 2004, developed by an experienced team of learning and technology experts, including technology guru David Gelernter and Core Knowledge cur-

riculum authority John Holdren. (See "Offering 'the Heart and Soul of an Excellent Education,'" *School Reform News*, July 2001.)

IEM is a nonprofit corporation with extensive experience in charter school development, administration, oversight, advocacy, and finance. The company's expertise also extends into curriculum, teacher training, educational resources, and technical support. Since 1993, the company has offered an innovative and individualized "virtual school" approach to student learning.

"IEM Schools are committed to delivering high-quality education programs to California students—any time and anywhere," said IEM CEO Randy Gaschler. "K12 is an extraordinary new program, rooted in solid educational content, high standards, and flexible technology tools."

IEM currently manages six charter schools: Horizon Instructional Systems, Heritage Family Academy, Golden Valley Charter School, Mattole Valley Charter School, Muir Charter School, and Eagles Peak Charter School. Located in six different counties, the schools reach families in another 18 counties throughout California, ranging from San Diego and Los Angeles to Alameda and Sacramento to Placer, Yuba, and Humboldt counties.

California District Renews Fast ForWord Contract

After reading teacher observations and reviewing student scores on state and district reading and math tests, school officials in Fontana, California, decided to renew the Unified School District's site license for the Fast ForWord family of language and reading programs from Scientific Learning.

The programs will be implemented district-wide and involve as many as 38,000 students in grades K-12 at 36 schools. The student population in the district is over 60 percent economically disadvantaged, and nearly one-third of the students are English language learners.

Lori Rhodes, Fontana's director of elementary education, said the district had set up a test of Fast ForWord with a few hundred second-through fifth-grade students who had previously scored in the bottom 20 percent on the reading test. The results from this group were compared with a control group of students matched by grade, gender, and previous test scores.

"Significant improvements were made by the students who received the Fast ForWord training on the District Language Arts Assessment," said Rhodes. "While there were no differences between the two groups prior to the training, after training, on average, the group that trained on the Fast ForWord program had higher read-

For more information...

WWW Further information about Fast ForWord and other neuroscience-based products from Scientific Learning is available from the company's Web site at www.ScientificLearning.com. Information about the Fontana Unified School District is available from Lori Rhodes at 909/357-5000 ext. 7100.

www.ScientificLearning.com



ing and math scores."

Rhodes noted test scores in the district traditionally had been very low. She said a number of different interventions had been tried previously, but they were unsuccessful.

DON'T MESS WITH TEXANS



"[I]t has continued to amaze me that the concept of customer service doesn't seem to have ever sunk into enterprises like school boards in general."

TEXAS STATE REPRESENTATIVE SCOTT HOCHBERG
COMMENTING ON THE PLANO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

an interview with Susan Sarhady
by George A. Clowes

In the struggle to advance parental choice in education, the battles that take place in affluent suburban communities are fundamentally different from those in low-income inner-city neighborhoods.

For example, the efforts of the Black Alliance for Educational Options are largely focused on persuading minority families to embrace choice as a solution to the problems they know exist in their inner-city schools. However, the major roadblock to the advance of school choice in the suburbs is not how to pursue a solution, but for families first to recognize there is a problem, and they have little choice or control over what their children are taught in public schools.

Susan Sarhady, a parent from Plano, Texas, discovered how powerless suburban parents are in 1998, when she began to investigate the Connected Math program the Plano Independent School District had begun to use two years earlier.

"Rights Concerning Academic Programs: A parent is entitled to request, with the expectation that the request will not be unreasonably denied, the addition of a specific academic class in the course of study of the parent's child in keeping with the required curriculum if sufficient interest is shown in the addition of the class to make it economically practical to offer the class."

TEXAS EDUCATION CODE, SECTION 26.003

The Connected Math program puts an emphasis on "critical thinking" and "problem-solving" with students working in groups to "discover" mathematical concepts. Calculator use is emphasized; accuracy and memorization of math facts are not.

Dissatisfied with the results of this type of math instruction, Sarhady and other parents formed the Plano Parental Rights Council and requested a traditional math program. The school board denied their request, despite a state law saying such requests should not be "unreasonably denied."

When she first came across the Connected Math program, Sarhady had no thought of taking on her local school board, no intention of becoming an activist in the school reform movement, no desire to lead an advocacy group to change the school curriculum, and no interest in testifying before the Texas Legislature and the U.S. Congress.

As she readily admits, she has no "Dr." in front of her name and no expertise in math. But, like parents everywhere, she does know her children and how they learn. That makes Sarhady and other dissatisfied parents very important figures in the school reform movement. Sarhady spoke recently with *School Reform News* Managing Editor George Clowes.

CLOWES: How did you get involved in education reform?

SARHADY: I'm just a parent. I'm not a teacher. My husband and I own our own business. I initially got involved in my children's schools by helping at parties, doing fundraising, working with the PTA, and so on. I always tried to focus on something that would help the teacher and also improve learning.

One time I organized a spelling bee for the fourth graders. I got more involved when Connected Math got to be an issue here in our district in the summer of 1998.

Plano has grown very rapidly over the past 20 years—it's now over 210,000 people—and one of the reasons people move here is the reputation of the school district. We have many new school buildings and lots of

technology. The parents here are relatively well-educated, two-income families. The average home value just went over two hundred thousand dollars, and so it is a privilege to be able to live in this community. People who live here expect their children to get a good education, and when the state reports record numbers of students passing the math test, they think everything must be all right.

But when you start researching those numbers, you find they're not really telling the whole story. Three years ago, a third grader had to get 33 out of 44 questions correct—75 percent—in order to meet the state's minimum passing standard. But this year, 2001, a third grader has to get only 24 out of 44 correct to pass. That's only 55 percent.

The Texas Education Agency will tell you this has to do with the relative difficulty of the questions and will tell you the content is getting much more difficult. But the question we have to ask is: "How much more difficult can third grade math get?"

I've taken a look at the 2001 test and it has questions like this: "Fred had 375 pennies in a jar. He took out 198 and spent them. How many pennies did Fred have left in the jar?" This cannot be that much more difficult than the test three years ago.

"Public" Meetings Not for the Public

Most local government bodies have some provision for members of the public to bring new items of concern—non-agenda items—to the attention of their elected officials at regularly scheduled meetings.

The Board of Trustees of the Plano Independent School District makes no such

provision. It has determined that meetings of the board of trustees "are open to the public, but are not meetings of the public. The purpose of the meetings is to conduct School District business and to provide the members of the Board an opportunity to discuss issues with each other and with staff."

CLOWES: *What made you and other parents concerned about the Connected Math program?*

SARHADY: The key words in Connected Math are "high-order thinking," "critical thinking," and "manipulatives." Children are encouraged to use calculators, even in elementary school.

I have great concern about my daughter's education when she's literally still trying to count on her fingers in fourth grade. I know enough about curriculum and teaching methods and how much time they spend on math to know that it is not that she is incapable. It is because they're not teaching that skill any more, and they're not expecting it. That puts her at a disadvantage.

In Connected Math, fractions are taught using fraction strips. To solve problems, the children fold pieces of paper into halves, fourths, eighths, ninths, and so on, and then they compare the sections to see which one is the smallest.

That doesn't teach a child the relationships between numbers, or that 10 can be made up of 1 and 9, 2 and 8, 3 and 7, and so on. The children don't learn number concepts. By focusing on manipulatives and counting on their fingers, they never reach the concept stage.

From the parents' point of view, Connected Math is not a program they perceive as being a good preparation for the future. Their main complaint is it leaves students unprepared for higher math—in Algebra I, Algebra II, and on from there. Algebra is a graduation requirement in Texas, but when we looked at participation rates in algebra in eighth grade and on, we found they are going down.

Also, if a child has a problem with homework, parents are not supposed to help because that would interfere with the child's "discovery" of the math concept. The difficulty there is some students never discover the concept.

Mostly, though, homework is a trivial pursuit where the child has to do something like flipping a coin five hundred times to discover that the probability of heads or tails is about 50 percent. Or tossing marshmallows into the air to discover if they're more likely to land on the side or on the end. In our effort to make math more meaningful and more accessible to children, we're trivializing it.

CLOWES: *Since you and other parents were dissatisfied with the program, you asked the school board for a different program, which is permitted under the Texas Education Code.*

SARHADY: But the code does not compel the district to comply. We testified before the House Education Committee here in Texas and the author of the law said it was meant to apply to a school that had, say, enough interest in French as well as Spanish so that parents could say, "We want to have French offered." And so, in theory, it also was meant to apply to the concept of a traditional math program versus a constructivist math program. When the legislators told us that, we went back and said to the school board, "Here's a list of 521 people who want this different math program."

We found we could request a different math program, but the district wasn't obligated to offer a different math program. The school board's answer was: "Math is math. It doesn't matter how it's taught."

Obviously, I couldn't disagree more, but all the law says is that we can ask. There is no avenue to make the district comply.

As Paul Sadler, chairman of the Texas House Public Education Committee, put it, "How do we put in law that the districts should be compassionate, interested, and try to accommodate as many parents' wishes as they can? I don't know how to put that into law."

CLOWES: *So due process compels the board to listen to the parents' request but doesn't obligate the board to do anything in support of that request?*

SARHADY: Correct. There's no support from any avenue. We've literally been everywhere. There's nothing we can do except to pull our children out of school and educate them elsewhere. The district as much as said that: If we don't like it, get out.

Unfortunately, parents to a great extent have asked for this—by being uninvolved; by thinking their responsibility for their child's education ended when they bought a house in a highly regarded school district; by not bothering to vote; and by not bothering to think it is important that our school board trustees be responsive to the public.

Some parents say, "Well, the school district has said this is the math program. I can't change it, but, by golly, I'm going to take care of my child." They will spend hundreds of dollars to tutor their children in mathematics, but they won't

stand up and be counted when it comes to telling the district, "Parents want a choice."

Then there are the parents who fight. Some keep fighting, some find they don't have a heart for it, and some eventually have to take care of their own child's needs. They may move out, or send their children to private school, or home-school them, or whatever other options there are.

Plano is a high-income area, and so lots of parents have these options to take care of their child, as well they should. But what happens to the children who are left behind? They are the ones with the parents whose heads are buried in the sand, or who are intent on protecting the status quo, or who are afraid to say anything.

CLOWES: *What recommendations would you give to parents who find themselves in a situation similar to the one you encountered in 1998?*

SARHADY: You really have to involve yourself very early on in the process, because, at the later stages, you might as well give up. It is very much a political process and it requires activism and advocacy. You must pay attention to the way your school district operates and how it makes decisions about curriculum and instruction.

At the same time, a lot of the decisions are state-based, and so someone needs to be involved at that level as well. Parents are under-represented in the political process and they need to have more influence on their school board members and on state legislators.

I think, overall, the biggest frustration is how parents are left out of the process of selecting educational programs at all levels—local, state, and national. Parents do not have any kind of a voice. We have to recognize that and try to address it.

We hear a lot about the poor showing at the polls during national elections, but it's even worse when citizens can't be bothered to vote in local school board and city council elections. When I ran for school board, only 5,700 people bothered to vote out of 177,000 registered voters. Everybody says, "Go run for school board and change things." Well, excuse me. It's not as simple as that.

You find you are battling an entrenched school

For more information...

WWW on the Plano Parental Rights Council and a lawsuit linked to the Connected Math curriculum, visit the Council's Web site at www.planoprc.org. The Plano Parental Rights Council is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to improving parental participation in their children's education.

district bureaucracy that can rally its employees, the Chamber of Commerce people, city employees, and local businesses with a vested interest in protecting the image of the school district. A good image for the school district will get people to move here, which will give them more tax dollars to spend. Lost in all of that is the fact that we're not even concerned whether the education that we're saying these children receive is anything like it's represented to be.

You're battling people whose main interest is protecting the image of the school district. Unfortunately, parents are willing participants in that whole process by not voting or by not being active. They're also trying to confirm to themselves that they made the right decision in moving here or staying here.

People will tell you, "I moved to Plano because of the reputation of the school system. I couldn't possibly have made the wrong decision." They don't want the value of their investment to go down. They don't want to think, "I'm stuck in a \$200,000 home, and they can't teach my child to multiply!"

CLOWES: *How responsive do you think the school board would be if you could simply take the money the district spends on your child and take it to a school across the street that has the kind of math program you want?*

SARHADY: That's one of the main debates in education. I would say that if the

funding followed the child, the district would be much more responsive to parents.

Here's what happens now: I'm dissatisfied with the facets of progressive education the school district has chosen to embrace and I'm concerned about how that has affected my nine-year-old. And so we are pulling her out of the school district and sending her to a private school. But our decision makes absolutely no difference to the school district. In fact, they're probably very happy not to hear me complain at my neighborhood school and to get my tax dollars without having to spend the money to educate my child.

It works to their advantage, and that's a darned shame in my mind, because I tried my best to make some changes to improve the quality of education. Who's the loser here? It certainly isn't the school district, and it isn't any of the school board members. My daughter has to pay by going to another school, and we have to pay to have her tutored and privately schooled.

State Education Roundup



California

Break-Up Movement Threatens L.A. Unified

A "break-up" movement in Los Angeles has the potential to completely dismantle the status quo in large urban school districts nationwide.

Attention currently is focused on the efforts of San Fernando to secede from Los Angeles Unified School District and form two districts, both of which would still be huge. But further along in the break-up process is the small community of Carson, with about 21,000 students—a drop in the bucket of LAUSD's 740,000 students.*

What makes Carson special is that its population is 84 percent minority and its schools are middle-of-the-pack in quality. Nevertheless, residents feel the massive district bureaucracy is unresponsive to their needs. Their breakaway vote will occur this November. One prominent opponent of the break-up: the United Teachers Los Angeles.

"If Carson is successful, people like [UTLA President Day] Higuchi fear that Los Angeles Unified could splinter like a glacier rending itself into icebergs," writes *New Times Los Angeles* reporter Michael Gougis in an article on the secession movement called "Bye Bye L.A. Mummified!" (See www.newtimesla.com/issues/2001-08-02/feature.html.)

Education Intelligence Agency Communiqué
August 6, 2001

*An audit by State Controller Kathleen Connell found LAUSD administrators routinely inflated student attendance figures for the last four years. Connell claims the district owes the state \$120 million for student funds it didn't deserve.



Connecticut

Schools Barred from Recommending Psychiatric Drugs

Responding to growing complaints and concerns, the Connecticut legislature in July unanimously approved a bill to

prohibit teachers, counselors, and other school officials from recommending psychiatric drugs for children. Governor John Rowland has signed the bill into law.

Psychiatric drug use is on the rise in the United States. According to the federal Drug Enforcement Administration, as many as 6 percent of all students in some elementary and middle schools take Ritalin or other psychiatric drugs.

Last year in the U.S., almost 20 million prescriptions were written for Ritalin, Adderall, and other stimulants used to treat Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, according to IMS Health, a health care information company. This represents a 35 percent increase over 1996, with most of the prescriptions written for boys under 12 years of age.

However, a 1999 study estimated a much higher figure than the DEA estimate, with Ritalin usage alone estimated to be 15 percent of all American children, and even higher percentages in affluent communities. A preliminary report by the Express Scripts corporation reveals more than one-third (37.5 percent) of Utah children aged 5-14 years are participating in ADHD drug therapy, with Utah leading the nation in adult anti-depressant use.

The Sutherland Report
August 8, 2001



Delaware

Tough Standards Adopted

More than half of Delaware's public schools could be in the lowest category allowed and would need to show significant improvements in order to meet standards in the next two years, under a new set of performance standards the State Board of Education adopted in July.

The rating system adopted by the board was based on a proposal from state Education Secretary Valerie A. Woodruff, developed with input from parents, teachers, school administrators, and representatives from the business community.

The framework of the rating system was established by legislation passed by the General Assembly. It requires scores from the Delaware Student Testing Program to be considered in three areas:

- absolute scores;
- overall improvement in scores in the current two years compared to the previous two years; and
- improvement in scores for students who did not meet the standards in previous years.

In finalizing the rating system for absolute scores, the board took Woodruff's advice and adopted a system with a sliding scale of improvement requirements. Schools with low scores would be required to improve by a larger number of points than schools with high scores. Woodruff explained this was to avoid penalizing very high-scoring schools for not going even higher the next year, as had occurred when Kentucky established its school accountability program.

Newszap!
July 19, 2001



Idaho

Punishments and Rewards in Accountability Plan

Under a draft plan from the state's Assessment and Accountability Commission, Idaho public school principals and teachers could get bonuses and their schools could get extra funding if their students showed continued improvement. On the other hand, if their students failed repeatedly, principals could lose their jobs and teachers lose their licenses to teach.

"What we want to say to school districts that work is that, 'You know what, we're going to reward you,'" said Idaho State Board of Education Chairman Karen McGee, who presented the plan to educators on August 8 in Nampa.

The plan calls for paying performance bonuses to teachers and principals based on student achievement. Schools that improved also would get more funds and greater discretion over spending.

But if schools didn't meet expectations, "We may need to bring in some intervention," warned McGee. Initially, this would include increased budgetary oversight and prescribed professional development for teachers and principals. Continued failure could lead to loss of accreditation of the affected schools, firing of the principals, and revocation of teaching licenses.

The Idaho Statesman
August 9, 2001

Illinois



A Day At The Races...

Teachers Study "Real World" at Racetrack

In 1999, a new law required Illinois teachers to accrue professional development credits in order to renew their teaching certificates. In August, *Chicago Tribune* reporter Stephanie Banchemo found that 45 teachers from the Chicago region received professional development credit for a day at the racetrack. It was part of a two-day course called "Probabilities in Gaming" in which teachers learned about betting odds and how to pick a horse.

"This is math in the real world," explained David Spangler, the adjunct professor who teaches the course. "We want to give these teachers a way to integrate probability in a meaningful way into their curricula."

A professional development workshop sponsored by the

Illinois Education Association offered certification credit for Tai Chi and personal massage. Special education teacher Elizabeth Read explained her students needed to learn to reduce their anxiety, and the classes might help.

Despite the instructors' interpretations of the benefits of gambling, mysticism, and back rubs in the elementary school curriculum, a lot of people are upset.

"It's a shame and a huge disappointment," said Carolyn Nordstrom of Chicago United, a business group involved in negotiating the recertification program. "We expended all this energy and time to meet the letter of the law, but not the spirit of the law. Many people, teachers included, are viewing the end result as a joke."

Education Intelligence Agency Communiqué
August 13, 2001



Indiana

Vigilant Students and Cameras Best for School Security

Costly security systems are not making schools much safer, according to a recent study from Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. Researchers surveyed the effectiveness of security equipment used by 41 school districts in 15 states.

The study was conducted last year by Crystal Garcia, an assistant professor in IUPUI's School of Public and Environmental Affairs, after many districts responded to a series of school shootings by installing security systems such as metal detectors, cameras, PIN codes, and scanner cards.

Though 22 of the districts in the study used metal detectors, fewer than half said they were effective in reducing crime. Only one-third of the school districts that used entry-control devices—scanners, PIN codes, and turnstiles—reported they were effective.

But two-thirds of the districts using cameras and recording devices said they were effective in reducing overall crime in schools, and even more effective in reducing property crimes and disruptive behavior. Cameras cost up to \$4,000 each, and a recording system costs about \$8,000.

Because most weapons are found through information from other students, not metal detectors, *students* are the best weapons detectors, says Indianapolis Public Schools Police Lt. Jim Stepancik.

The Indianapolis Star
August 6, 2001



Kansas

General Teacher Shortage Questioned

A large part of the argument for higher teacher salaries in Kansas has rested on the number of vacant teaching positions as the fall semester gets underway. However, the Kansas Public Policy Institute points out:

- The number of vacant positions this year is smaller than last year.
- The vacancies are confined to just two out of five (41 percent) of the state's school districts.
- Nearly half of all vacancies are for special education teachers with unique skills—a problem unlikely to be solved by a general teacher salary increase.
- As the school year progresses, vacancies usually drop to less than 1 percent of the state's total teaching positions.

As of August 1, a Kansas State Department of Education survey reported a teacher shortage of approximately 492 positions statewide in public schools. A year earlier, KSDE had reported 530 teacher vacancies, a number that dropped to 280 unfilled positions as the year progressed. From 1996 through 2000, the number of statewide teacher vacancies settled down each year to a range of 111 to 196.

Kansas Public Policy Institute Free-State Weekly
August 16, 2001



Michigan

School Rating Plan Killed

Saying the system relied too much on state test scores, Michigan's new Superintendent of Schools, Thomas D. Watkins, has scrapped an accreditation plan for the state's public schools. The State Department of Education had developed the plan over the past four years.

While educators applauded the decision, GOP Governor John Engler was reported to be disappointed that the performance-based ratings had not been released.

Earlier this year, the *Detroit News* had estimated that one in six, or 17 percent, of the state's 660 high schools would be classed as "not accredited" under the proposed new system. In the Detroit area, the figure would soar to 40 percent. The "not accredited" label would be earned by a school with:

- fewer than 80 percent of students taking the required tests; or
- fewer than 25 percent of test-takers passing any one of the tests.

If fewer than 25 percent of test-takers passed two or more tests, the school would have been classed "unaccredited."

Education Week
July 11, 2001



Nevada

1,000 Teachers Quit Union

The Clark County Education Association in Nevada, at 10,000 members one of the largest local affiliates of NEA, lost about 1,000 members during the union's one-month "drop" period.

"In normal times, the number would be extraordinary," CCEA Executive Director John Jasonek told the *Las Vegas Sun*. "But these are not normal times."

The union is claiming the membership loss is due to teachers leaving Las Vegas because of poor salaries and working conditions. But the district believes the teachers didn't quit... they just left the union. "My sense is that most of these teachers are still with the district," said George Ann Rice, assistant superintendent for human resources.

Education Intelligence Agency Communiqué
July 23, 2001



North Dakota

No Refund of Illegally Collected Fees

Based on a consensus of state and local school officials, there will be no refund of the school fees North Dakota school districts illegally collected from parents for at least the last 10 years.

In a decision dated August 10, state Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem ruled schools are barred from charging all students any across-the-board fees because North Dakota's constitution guarantees a free public education. The legality of the fees was questioned by a Fargo district parent this summer. However, the issue of reimbursement was not raised.

"I can only answer questions put to me," Stenehjem told *The Fargo Forum*, saying the Department of Public Instruction was "the arbiter of these fees." A DPI spokesperson said the department's current position was that past years' fees did not need to be refunded, but some parents don't like that.

"I'd like to see a refund just on principle alone," said Fargo parent Brenda Disette. "If the roles were reversed and I had taken it illegally, I'd have to reimburse."

According to Stenehjem, the only fees that are legal are book deposits and fees for classes or activities where the student has the option not to take part, such as sports participation, materials for an industrial arts class, and a parking permit.

The Fargo Forum
August 16, 2001



Oklahoma

Gov: Not Educating a Child Is "Child Abuse"

Reacting angrily to news of a drop of three-tenths of a point in this year's average ACT scores for Oklahoma high school students—the most significant decline in more than 10 years—Governor Frank Keating charged, "It is child abuse not to have a well-educated child." He said it was "utterly scandalous" to spend "all this money" and end up with a child that was "stunted for life," unable to read or do math at grade level.

"What in the world has been done to them?" he asked at a press conference on August 15 in the state Capitol. "We have accepted a culture of mediocrity in academics, though we'd never tolerate a culture of mediocrity in athletics," he added.

To address the poor performance of students, Keating proposed more after-school tutoring and summer school for students who fall behind, plus a requirement for four years of math, English, science, and social studies for high school graduation. He also asked for merit pay and bonus pay for schools and teachers.

"We are spending a lot of money on public education and in many cases we are not getting the results we deserve," said the GOP governor.

The Oklahoman
August 16, 2001



Tennessee

Should Students Come to College Ready to Learn?

Under an idea floated by the Tennessee Board of Regents in July, remedial and developmental instruction programs would be removed from the state's six Regents four-year universities and placed in the state's 13 community two-year colleges.

According to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, 49.4 percent of all first-time freshmen at Tennessee state schools took one or more remedial or developmental courses last fall. Those figures included community colleges, where 72.1 percent of first-time freshmen needed the catch-up courses, and state universities, where 32.9 percent needed them.

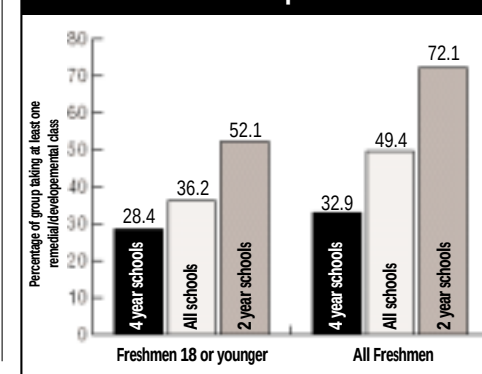
For freshmen aged 18 or younger, statewide figures were 36.2 percent, which included 52.1 percent at the two-year colleges and 28.4 percent at the universities. From time to time, state legislators propose making high schools pay colleges for every graduate who needs to take the catch-up courses.

At 63.7 percent, Tennessee State University had the highest proportion of first-time freshmen taking at least one remedial or developmental course last fall. At Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, the figure was more than 46 percent last fall.

"We could lose half our freshman class," said Austin Peay's developmental studies director, Meredith Gildrie.

The Tennessean
July 23, 2001

Freshmen Taking at Least One Remedial or Developmental Class



"The combined penalties, sanctions, and reimbursements ordered by the court will likely total more than \$500,000, the largest fine ever levied against the WEA."

UNION continued from page 1

attorneys' fees. The combined penalties, sanctions, and reimbursements ordered by the court will likely total more than \$500,000, the largest fine ever levied against the WEA.

"WEA officials are used to breaking the law and having their way with teachers' paychecks because they think no one is big enough to stop them," said Lynn Harsh, executive director of the Evergreen Freedom Foundation (EFF), which initiated the action. "Judge Tabor just sent those union officials an expensive reminder that they are not above the law."

Sinful, Tyrannical ... Illegal

While Thomas Jefferson regarded it as "sinful and tyrannical" to "compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves," the citizens of the Evergreen State added "illegal" to the third President's words of opprobrium in a 1992 initiative, at least with regard to agency shop fees.

Agency fee payers are teachers who opt out of union membership, often for political or religious reasons, but who still are required to pay regular member dues, less the portion spent on politics and other non-traditional union functions.

"A labor organization may not use agency shop fees paid by an individual who is not a member of the organization to make contributions or expenditures to influence an election or to operate a political committee, unless affirmatively authorized by the individual," according to Washington state law, section RCW 42.17.760.

But laws aren't much help if they aren't actively enforced, which in this case was the responsibility of the State Public Disclosure Commission (PDC). While Tabor found the WEA had ignored the "obvious requirement" of the law because it did not want to go through the "laborious process" of securing affirmative authorizations, he also painted a picture of a watchdog agency dozing at its post.

"The PDC clearly did not move decisively to enforce this statute ..." declared the judge. In fact, he added, "The PDC acted only when spurred by citizen complaints."

Still, the court was unimpressed by the WEA's attempt to use the PDC's lack of enforcement as an excuse for its own illegal actions. The WEA argued that if the PDC had told them what was expected, they would have "immediately complied." Tabor reminded the WEA that "a violation of statute is still a violation."

"[A] person speeding down a roadway does not have the right to speed just because a police officer does not make a traffic stop when the opportunity arises," the judge opined tartly.

The spur that prompted the PDC to act was provided by EFF in June of 2000, when the not-for-profit organization filed a 45-day notice with the state Attorney General on behalf of affected teachers, alleging the WEA had used teachers' dues money from agency fee payers for politics, a clear violation of state law. After an initial investigation by the PDC, the case was referred back to the Attorney General and the trial was held in May 2001.

"The citizens of this state should be very pleased with the thorough investigation conducted by our attorney general's office and their excellent arguments in court," Harsh said.

The teacher union's position was that agency fees were placed into the general fund and then spent each year as the union deemed appropriate, arguing that even if the agency fees had been separated, they would still come back into the general fund as "surplus" funds at the end of the year. Tabor found this reasoning "erroneous," noting that the distinction between collecting and spending was lost when funds were commingled in the general fund. Also, the issue was not whether agency fees change their character after a year, but that the union was collecting them from non-members "without first gaining their affirmative authorization to do so."

After the verdict was announced, the teacher union issued a news release saying it never intentionally used the agency fees for political purposes. The editorial board of *The Columbian* scoffed at this excuse.

"[T]hat is akin to telling someone you didn't mean to get pregnant even though you weren't using any form of birth control," wrote Elizabeth

For more information...

WWW

Further information on the Evergreen Freedom Foundation and its work is available from the organization's Web site at www.effwa.org, where a copy of Judge Gary Tabor's July 31 ruling also may be found.

"The WEA obviously did not care enough about dissenting educators' rights to ensure that their money was not misspent or misallocated."

ELIZABETH HOVDE, EDITORIAL BOARD
THE COLUMBIAN

Hovde for the editorial board. "The WEA obviously did not care enough about dissenting educators' rights to ensure that their money was not misspent or misallocated."

Tabor gave the WEA 90 days to present him with a procedure assuring that union officials will comply with the law in the future. Since the state did not seek this as a remedy, the ruling does not order reimbursement for those teachers whose money was wrongfully used by the WEA instead of being reimbursed to them. However, a separate class action suit has been filed on behalf of more than 4,000 affected teachers.

EFF is a public policy research organization, founded in 1991 with the mission of advancing individual liberty, free enterprise, and responsible government. The 341 individuals and businesses who supported EFF in its first year of operation now has grown to over 2,500 individuals, businesses, associations, private foundations, and trusts.

Answers to the Math Quiz

- 1 - C [12th-grade test question]
- 2 - B [8th-grade test question]
- 3 - B [4th-grade test question]
- 4 - E [8th-grade]
- 5 - Any numbers greater than 18. [8th-grade]
- 6 - A [12th-grade]
- 7 - C [4th-grade]
- 8 - $(3x + 1)(x - 5)$ [12th-grade]
- 9 - B [12th-grade]
- 10 - B [12th-grade]
- 11 - D [4th-grade]
- 12 - 8 [8th-grade]
- 13 - 2.03 [12th-grade]
- 14 - 5 feet [4th-grade]
- 15 - 0 [12th-grade]
- 16 - C [4th-grade]
- 17 - A [8th-grade]
- 18 - B [4th-grade]
- 19 - B [12th-grade]
- 20 - A [12th-grade]
- 21 - D [4th-grade]
- 22 - C [12th-grade]
- 23 - 1571 feet [8th-grade]
- 24 - 5 pounds [8th-grade]
- 25 - 397 [4th-grade]
- 26 - 9 dollar bills [4th-grade]
- 27 - B [8th-grade]
- 28 - B [12th-grade]
- 29 - B [8th-grade]
- 30 - C [8th-grade]
- 31 - B [4th-grade]
- 32 - 3.3 (NAEP also gives 3.30 as a correct answer, which is not the case since two decimal place precision calls for 3.33) [8th-grade]
- 33 - Fold in half and cut. Fold both halves in half and cut again. [4th-grade]

PR and the Public Schools

Tip: Before announcing bad test scores, inspire community pride

BY GEORGE A. CLOWES

How to announce poor test scores:

"The opening paragraphs should announce and explain an action plan and several paragraphs later, announce the scores. The point is to give the community something to be proud of and the impression that the problem is being addressed. The spin you put on it will be included [in subsequent news reports] 9 out of 10 times."

TERESA M. RAFFERTY

PUBLIC INFORMATION COORDINATOR

FREEHOLD REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT, NEW JERSEY

Rafferty's guidelines for announcing bad news were part of a presentation called "Communicating Proactively in Sensitive Situations" that she delivered at the annual conference of the National School Public Relations Association in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in July.

According to Mike Antonucci, who reported on the conference in several issues of his *Education Intelligence Agency Communiqué*, Rafferty said public relations officers have to "balance their act" between being honest with the community and strengthening positive public perceptions of the schools. When faced with bad news, no response is usually the worst response, she explained.

Spin Control

Fast response is best in a real crisis, advised Lew Armistead, president of LA Communications in Reston, Virginia. Public relations officers should be the first to discuss a crisis with the press and the public, because "then you control the communications agenda."

Spin?

Controlling the communications agenda?

PR for public schools?

Are there really enough public relations officers employed by the public schools to have a

national organization and an annual conference?

"[T]here are over 1,000 school district public relations officers at this event, along with some superintendents and other school officials," reported Antonucci, noting that people attending the conference "have been hired with your tax money for the specific purpose of presenting a positive image of the public schools to you, the public."

"If you could see the lineup of people, resources, and money behind the effort to persuade you that all is well, you would be astonished that any negative or critical coverage appears anywhere, at any time," he wrote.

Although teachers are rightly recognized as the most important element in improving student achievement, the fact remains that not only does public education employ fewer classroom teachers (48 percent) than other workers (52 percent), but public education's non-teaching employees are, on average, paid more than the classroom teachers. Antonucci's report makes it clear that public relations officers are an important contingent among those non-teaching employees.

For more information...

WWW

Mike Antonucci's reports on the July 2001 annual conference of the National School Public Relations Association are available from the Web site of the Education Intelligence Agency at <http://members.aol.com/educationintel/>. The Agency is an organization that conducts public education research, analysis, and investigations. A weekly *Communiqué* is available on request from EducationIntel@aol.com.

Among the workshops and sessions at the NSPRA conference:

- "Using the Media to Reverse Negative Perceptions"
- "Dealing with Public Anger: New Approaches to an Old Problem"
- "Survivor PR—How to Outwit, Outplay, and Outlast Our Critics"
- "They Just Don't Understand"
- "Image Is Everything in Today's Marketplace"
- "Bribing Your Critics and Other Unusual Community Involvement Strategies"

"Public relations officers have to 'balance their act' between being honest with the community and strengthening positive public perceptions of the schools."

Working with the Community

The latter session was conducted by David G. Clohessy, director of community services for Riverview Gardens Schools in St. Louis, Missouri. The "bribery" consisted of offering the district's printing services, photography, layout and computer publishing skills, use of facilities and staff, and newsletter space for community activities and information. Clohessy also advised providing food at community meetings to boost attendance.

According to Antonucci, Clohessy spoke a little more freely than he should have. At one point, he referred disparagingly to a community group, then quickly corrected himself by adding, "No, no! We love them all!" He also admitted the monthly awards or certificates that his district gave to community members were not necessarily bestowed on the most deserving individuals.

"We choose someone from those communities where we need the most support," Clohessy said.

PR officials also may choose to structure community meetings to deny any unsupportive community members the opportunity to convey their concerns to a wider audience. For example, Mary Louise Scheid, director of the office of school and community relations for the Indianapolis Public Schools, explained why she uses a facilitated small group discussion format for community meetings rather than a panel with questions from the audience.

"We didn't want people stirring up emotions we're afraid will make us lose control of the message," Antonucci reported her telling the conference.

How Schools "Manage" Parents

Why is it that parents who give a mediocre grade to public schools in general almost invariably have a favorable impression of the performance of their local public school?

A new book by Temple University history professor William Cutler provides an answer: Organized public relations programs have been an essential part of urban school systems since the 1920s, with public school educators working systematically to influence public opinion about their schools. Teacher colleges offer courses in educational publicity and strategies for building local support.

"Most school systems seek to build a favorable public impression of their performance through a steady barrage of announcements, events, and media releases," notes a commentary on Cutler's book posted under "Briefings" on the Education Consumers ClearingHouse Web site at www.education-consumers.com.

"Given that what the public knows about education mostly comes from the schools themselves, it is little wonder that most parents and communities retain a favorable impression of their local schools despite objective assessments to the contrary," the review concludes.

Cutler's book, *Parents and Schools: The 150-Year Struggle for Control in American Education*, uses meeting minutes, reports, published articles, and other materials to trace the relationship between parents and schools from 1840 until the 1990s. The educators in the public schools emerge as the

victors in this struggle, even though most parents still retain the notion that they control the public schools through their local elected school board.

While educators and reformers seek the support of parents for the schools, Cutler points out they often have viewed parents as a bad influence on their children and "agreed that many parents could no more be trusted with their children's health than with their education."

"Educators may say they are working to bring about the kind of schooling that the public demands, but historically they have made a concerted effort to impose their views on the public," notes East Tennessee State University education professor J. E. Stone, who heads the Education Consumers ClearingHouse. "Reforms do not work because the education community believes its role is to do what it conceives as in the best interests of children regardless of what parents and taxpayers may want."

For more information...

WWW

William W. Cutler III, *Parents and Schools: The 150-Year Struggle for Control in American Education*. 290 pages, \$25.00 0-226-13216-1 (University of Chicago Press, 2000). The book is available for just \$17.50 through Amazon.com at <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0226132161/theheartlandinst>



"Reforms do not work because the education community believes its role is to do what it conceives as in the best interests of children regardless of what parents and taxpayers may want."

J. E. STONE

EDUCATION CONSUMERS CLEARINGHOUSE

BY GEORGE A. CLOWES

"It is better for the public to procure at the market whatever the market can supply; because there it is by competition kept up in quality, and reduced to its minimum price."

THOMAS JEFFERSON, 1808

"We don't want our schools to be open to the market."

FRED VAN LEEUWEN

GENERAL SECRETARY OF EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL

JULY 25-29, 2001

As Thomas Jefferson's advice from almost two centuries ago indicates, privatization has a long pedigree in the United States, and its benefits address two fundamental aims of current public school reform: How to achieve a high-quality education, and how to do so without spending more tax dollars than necessary.

But as Fred van Leeuwen's assertion to the recent World Congress of teacher unions also indicates, privatization of public school services is likely to be strongly opposed by organized labor.

The Web sites of the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers leave no doubt that opposing privatization is a top priority for the teacher unions. That opposition is just as strong in the nation's smallest school district as it is in the largest, and it extends beyond U.S. borders to international trade pacts affecting the import of educational services from foreign countries around the world.

Free Trade in Education

According to NEA Resolution A-22, “The Association opposes any privatization or subcontracting arrangement that . . . [r]eplaces services that are, or could feasibly be, provided by the public schools.”

At the recent World Congress of teacher unions in Jomtien, Thailand, the 1,100 or so delegates approved a resolution opposing attempts to open up international trade in educational services by including them in the General Agreement on Trade in Services.

A perceptive conference report by *Education Week* writer Jeff Archer laid out what was bothering the teacher unions.

The World Trade Organization will meet in November in Qatar, and according to Archer, the teacher unions appear concerned the U.S. may agree to liberalize international trade in K-12 educational services. Such liberalization could lift restrictions on who can open and operate a school and who can be a teacher. The teacher unions fear that a foreign country exporting to the U.S. could argue American restrictions in this regard are protectionist barriers and seek to have them lifted.

Union Blocks Cost-Saving Effort

Earlier this year, the Michigan School Boards Leaders Association honored school board members Mary Rogala and James Harden with

Courage in Leadership Awards for their valiant efforts to try to direct more of the tax dollars at their disposal to the education of the children in the Upper Peninsula's Arvon Township School District. The district is one of the nation's smallest, with only 15 students, a budget of \$260,000, and five employees, all members of the Michigan Education Association.

Concerned with excessive non-educational expenditures—such as \$11 per child per day for lunch—Rogala and Harden were instrumental in gaining board approval last July for a budget that eliminated non-teaching staff from the payroll and reduced transportation, food service, and janitorial spending by 30 percent. The school board planned to redirect the savings to a \$5,000 boost in the school library fund and a \$20,000 program for science, music, art, and technology.

But the MEA fought the proposal, filing a flurry of lawsuits against board president Rogala and harassing another board member who subsequently withdrew his support for the cost-reduction measure. The school board reversed the budget proposal at a special meeting in August.

One of the MEA's arguments is that contracting out does not work, and in fact may cost the district even more money. However, Rogala pointed out that the MEA contracts out at its own headquarters.

"It shouldn't be this difficult to help kids," commented MSBLA Executive Director Lori Yaklin. "But if you think the teacher union isn't willing to go to the mat for a 15-student school, think again."

Edison May Take on Philadelphia's Schools

With an expected 136 schools and about 75,000 students at the start of the 2001-2002 school year, Edison Schools, Inc. is the nation's largest private manager of public schools—but it hasn't made a profit since it was founded by CEO Christopher Whittle nine years ago. When the company recently reported a fiscal 2001 loss of \$38.1 million on revenues of \$375.8 million, Whittle said he expects the company to become profitable in fiscal 2002.

Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge recently hired Edison to make recommendations on how to turn around Philadelphia's public schools.

Only one in eight of Philadelphia's 210,000 students perform at a "proficient" level on state tests; the school board has ignored cost-saving proposals from state auditors and run up a \$216 million deficit; and the district currently is operating without a superintendent. On August 1, Ridge gave Edison \$2.7 million to analyze the district and come up with a reform plan by the end of September.

Edison's relations with teacher unions and parents are mixed. The company met with opposition from the teacher union in San Francisco and Las Vegas, but with an offer to work together in Miami. Parents in Baltimore and San Francisco like Edison, but parents in New York City voted to keep Edison out. Last year, school officials in Inkster, Michigan voted for management by Edison rather than face takeover by the state. Now, Philadelphia's school system may face the same choice.

For more information...

The private-sector education market in the United States grew 8 percent to top the \$100 billion mark in revenues last year, according to a new report on the education industry published in August by Eduventures, an independent research firm focused on learning markets.

Although pre-K-12 is the largest industry segment, it has not been growing as rapidly as the post-secondary segment, where for-profit degree-granting institutions have increased their share of the market in recent years.

The policy implications of the increasing contribution of for-profit firms in the postsecondary education marketplace are examined in a study from the Education Commission of the States, which also was published in August. Similar examinations of the pre-K-12 education segment are likely as the increasing presence of for-profit institutions also creates a marketplace there.

WWW

A summary of Eduventures' August 2001 report on the industry, *Markets & Activities 2001*, may be viewed at Eduventures' Web site at www.eduventures.com. The full report, authored by David Evans, E. Yegin Chen, Sean McVety and Jim McVety, is available at Eduventures' research sub-

Kathleen F. Kelly's August 2001 report from the Education Commission of the States, "The Rise of For-Profit Degree-Granting Institutions: Policy Considerations for States" by Kathleen F. Kelly, is available from the Commission's Web site at www.ecs.org/clearing-house/28/37/2837.htm.



According to Utah State University's Substitute Teaching Institute, about 10 percent of American classrooms need a substitute teacher on any given day. That's more than a quarter of a million substitute teachers a day.

Needing up to 100 substitutes a day four and a half years ago, Carlos Hicks, superintendent of the Gulfport, Mississippi school district, asked a Kelly Services manager about providing substitute teachers. As a result of that query, Kelly Educational Staffing was formed and now provides substitute teachers to nearly 900 schools in 31 states.

By using Kelly, schools save time and resources by eliminating the need to recruit, screen, interview, train, and schedule substitute teachers. According to David Hall, assis-

tant superintendent of Catoosa Public Schools in Oklahoma, his district's motivation for selecting Kelly was threefold:

- Better-qualified substitutes, to better serve students;
- Reports of high-quality service from current clients; and
- Saving money on overall costs, including payroll processing and paperwork.

Kelly provides substitute teachers who meet local certification requirements for any teaching situation, including elementary, middle, and high schools, alternative schools, special education, physical education classes, and fine arts, in public or private schools. Substitutes are eligible for a variety of benefits and training, including participation in Kelly's 401(k) plan.

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